The MUD LARKS

CROSBIE GARSTIN

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The Old Corner Book

THE MUD LARKS

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THE MUD LARKS

BY

CROSBIE GARSTIN

LIEUTENANT, 1st KING EDWARD'S HORSE

NEW YORK

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TO THE MEMORY OF

MY BROTHER

CAPTAIN DENIS NORMAN GARSTIN,

D.S.O., M.C.

ORDER OF ST. ANNE OF RUSSIA

(10TH ROYAL HUSSARS)

KILLED IN ACTION

NEAR ARCHANGEL, RUSSIA

AUGUST 17TH, 1918

"You gallop on unfooted asphodel . . .
And wave beyond the stars that all is well."

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THE MUD LARKS

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I

THE "FERTS"

WHEN I was young, my parents sent me to a boarding school, not in any hopes of getting me educated, but because they wanted a quiet home.

At that boarding school I met one Frederick Delane Milroy, a chubby flame-coloured brat who had no claims to genius, excepting as a *littérateur*.

The occasion that established his reputation with the pen was a Natural History essay. We were given five sheets of foolscap, two hours and our own choice of subject. I chose the elephant, I remember, having once been kind to one through the medium of a bag of nuts.

Frederick D. Milroy headed his effort "The Fert" in large capitals, and began, "The fert is a noble animal——" He got no further, the extreme nobility of the ferret having apparently blinded him to its other characteristics.

The other day, as I was wandering about on the "line," dodging Boche crumps with more agility than grace, I met Milroy (Frederick Delane) once more.

He was standing at the entrance of a cosy little funk-hole, his boots and tunic undone, sniffing the morning nitro-glycerine. He had swollen considerably since our

literary days, but was wearing his hair as red as ever, and I should have known it anywhere—on the darkest night. I dived for him and his hole, pushed him into it, and re-introduced myself. He remembered me quite well, shook my chilblains heartily, and invited me further underground for tea and talk.

It was a nice hole, cramped and damp, but very deep, and with those Boche love-tokens thudding away upstairs I felt that the nearer Australia the better. But the rats! Never before have I seen rats in such quantities; they flowed unchidden all over the dug-out, rummaged in the cupboards, played kiss-in-the-ring in the shadows, and sang and bawled behind the old oak panelling until you could barely hear yourself shout. I am fond of animals, but I do not like having to share my tea with a bald-headed rodent who gets noisy in his cups, or having a brace of high-spirited youngsters wrestle out the championship of the district on my bread-and-butter.

Freddy apologised for them; they were getting a bit above themselves, he was afraid, but they were seldom dangerous, seldom attacked one unprovoked. "Live and let live" was their motto. For all that they *did* get a trifle *de trop* sometimes; he himself had lost his temper when he awoke one morning to find a brawny rat sitting on his face combing his whiskers in mistake for his own (a pardonable error in the dark); and, determining to teach them a lesson, had bethought him of his old friend, the noble fert. He therefore sent home for two of the best.

The ferrets arrived in due course, received the names Burroughs and Welcome, were blessed and turned loose.

They had had a rough trip over at the bottom of the mail sack, and were looking for trouble. An old rat strolled out of his club to see what all the noise was about, and got the excitement he needed. Seven friends came to his funeral and never smiled again. There was great rejoicing in that underground Mess that evening; Burroughs and Welcome were fêted on bully beef and condensed milk, and made honorary members.

For three days the good work went on; there was weeping in the cupboards and gnashing of teeth behind the old oak panelling. Then on the fourth day Burroughs and Welcome disappeared, and the rats swarmed to their own again. The deserters were found a week later; they had wormed through a system of rat-holes into the next dug-out, inhabited by the Atkinses, and had remained there, honoured guests.

It is the nature of the British Atkins to make a pet of anything, from a toad to a sucking-pig—he cannot help it. The story about St. George, doyen of British soldiers, killing that dragon—nonsense! He would have spanked it, maybe, until it promised to reform, then given it a cigarette, and taken it home to amuse the children. To return to our ferrets, Burroughs and Welcome provided no exception to the rule; they were taught to sit up and beg, and lie down and die, to turn handsprings and play the mouth-organ; they were gorged with Maconochie, plum jam and rum ration; it was

doubtful if they ever went to bed sober. Times out of number they were borne back to the Officers' Mess and exhorted to do their bit, but they returned immediately to their friends the Atkinses, via their private route, not unnaturally preferring a life of continuous carousal and vaudeville among the flesh-pots, to sapping and mining down wet rat-holes.

Freddy was of opinion that, when the battalion proceeded up Unter den Linden, Burroughs and Welcome would be with it as regimental mascots, marching behind the band, bells on their fingers, rings on their toes. He also assured me that if he ever again has to write an essay on the Fert, its characteristics, the adjective "noble" will not figure so prominently.

II

OTTO

IN the long long ago, Frobisher and I, assisted by a handful of native troopers, kept the flag flying at M'Vini.

We hoisted it to the top of a tree at sun-up, where it remained, languidly flapping its tatters over leagues of Central Africa bush till sunset, when we hauled it down again—an arduous life. After we had been at M'Vini about six months, had shot everything worth shooting, and knew one another's funny stories off by heart, Frobisher and I grew bored with each other, hated in fact the sight, sound and mere propinquity of each other, and, shutting ourselves up in our separate huts, communicated only on occasions of the direst necessity, and then by the curtest of official notes. Thus a further three months dragged on.

Then one red-hot afternoon came Frobisher's boy to my wattle-and-dab, bearing a note.

"Visitor approaching from S.W. got up like a May Queen; think it must be the Kaiser. Lend me a bottle of whisky, and mount a guard—must impress the blighter."

I attached my last bottle of Scotch to the messenger and sallied forth to mount a guard, none too easy a job, as the Army had gone to celebrate somebody's birth-

day in the neighbouring village. However, I discovered one remaining trooper lying in the shade of a loquat-tree. He was sick—dying, he assured me; but I persuaded him to postpone his demise for at least half an hour, requisitioned his physician (the local witch doctor) and two camp followers, and, leaving my cook-boy to valet them, dashed to my hut to make my own toilet. A glimpse through the cane mats five minutes later showed me that our visitors had arrived.

A fruity German officer in full gala rig (white gloves and all) was cruising about on mule-back before our camp, trying to discover whether it was inhabited or not. We let him cruise for a quarter of an hour without taking any steps to enlighten him. Then, at a given signal, Frobisher, caparisoned in every fal-lal he could collect, issued from his hut, and I turned out the improvised guard. A stirring spectacle; and it had the desired effect, for the German afterwards admitted to being deeply impressed, especially by the local wizard, who paraded in his professional regalia, and, coming to cross-purposes with his rifle, bayoneted himself and wept bitterly. The ceremonies over and the casualty removed, we adjourned to Frobisher's *kya,* broached the whisky and sat about in solemn state, stiff with accoutrements, sodden with perspiration. Our visitor kept the Red, White and Black flying on a tree over the border, he explained; this was his annual ceremonial call. He sighed and brushed the sweat from his nose with the tips of a white glove—"the weather was warm, *nicht wahr?*" I admitted that we dabbled in flag-flying our-

selves and that the weather was all he claimed for it (which effort cost me about four pounds in weight). Tongues lolling, flanks heaving, we discussed the hut tax, the melon crop, the monkey-nut market, the nigger —and the weather again.

Suddenly Frobisher sprang up, cast loose the shackles of his Sam Browne, hurled it into a corner, and began tearing at his tunic hooks. I stared at him in amazement—such manners before visitors! But our immaculate guest leapt to his feet with a roar like a freed lion, and, stripping his white gloves, flung them after the Sam Browne, whereupon a fury of undressing came upon us. Helmets, belts, tunics, shirts were piled into the corner, until at length we stood in our underclothes, laughing and unashamed. After that we got on famously, that Teuton and we, and three days later, when he swarmed aboard his mule and left for home (in pyjamas this time) it was with real regret we waved him farewell.

But not for long. Within a month we were surprised by a hail from the bush, and there was Otto, mule, pyjamas and all.

"'Ullo, 'ullo, 'ullo!" he carolled. "'Ere gomes ze Sherman invasion! Durn out ze guard! He roared with laughter, fell off his palfrey and bawled for his batman, who ambled up, balancing a square box on his woolly pate.

His mother in Munich had sent him a case of Lion Brew, Otto explained, so he had brought it along.

We wassailed deep into that night and out the other

side, and we liked our Otto more than ever. We had plenty in common, the same loneliness, fevers, climate, and niggers to wrestle with; moreover he had been in England, and liked it; he smoked a pipe; he washed. Also, as he privily confided to us in the young hours of one morning, he had his doubts as to the divinity of the Kaiser, and was not quite convinced that Richard Strauss had composed the music of the spheres.

He was a bad Hun (which probably accounted for his presence at the uttermost, hottermost edge of the All-Highest's dominions), but a good fellow. Anyhow, we liked him, Frobisher and I; liked his bull-mouthed laughter, his drinking songs and full-blooded anecdotes, and, on the occasions of his frequent visits, put our boredom from us, pretended to be on the most affectionate terms, and even laughed uproariously at each other's funny stories. Up at M'Vini, in the long long ago, the gleam of pyjamas amongst the loquats, and "'Ere gomes ze Sherman invasion!" booming through the bush, became a signal for general goodwill.

In the fullness of time Otto went home on leave, and, shortly afterwards, the world blew up.

And now I have met him again, a sodden, muddy, bloody, shrunken, saddened Otto, limping through a snow-storm in the custody of a Canadian corporal. He was the survivor of a rear-guard, the Canuck explained, and had "scrapped like a bag of wild-cats" until knocked out by a rifle butt. As for Otto himself, he hadn't much to say; he looked old, cold, sick and infinitely disgusted. He had always been a poor Hun.

Only once did he show a gleam of his ancient form of those old hot, happy, pyjama days on the Equator.

A rabble of prisoners—Jägers, Grenadiers, Uhlans, whatnots—came trudging down the road, an unshorn, dishevelled herd of cut-throats, propelled by a brace of diminutive kilties, who paused occasionally to treat them to snatches of flings and to hoot triumphantly.

Otto regarded his fallen compatriots with disgusted lack-lustre eyes, then turning to me with a ghost of his old smile, "'Ere gomes ze Sherman invasion," said he.

III

A. E.'S BATH AND BROCK'S BENEFIT

NEVER have I seen a kiltie platoon wading through the cold porridge of snow and slush of which our front used to be composed, but I have said, with my French friend, *"Mon Dieu les currents d'air!"* and thank Fate that I belong to a race which reserves its national costume for fancy-dress balls.

It is very well for MacAlpine of Ben Lomond, who has stalked his haggis and devoured it raw, who beds down on thistles for preference and grows his own fur; but it is very hard on Smith of Peckham, who through no fault of his own finds himself in a Highland regiment, trying to make his shirt-tails do where his trousers did before. But the real heather-mixture, double-distilled Scot is a hardy bird with different ideas from *nous autres* as to what is cold: also as to what is hot. Witness the trying experience of our Albert Edward.

Our Albert Edward and a Hun rifle grenade arrived at the same place at the same time, intermingled and went down to the Base to be sifted. In the course of time came a wire from our Albert Edward, saying he had got the grenade out of his system and was at that moment at the railhead; were we going to send him a horse or weren't we?

Emma was detailed for the job, which was a mis-

take, because Emma was not the mount for a man who had been softening for five months in hospital. She had only two speeds in her répertoire, a walk which slung you up and down her back from her ears to her croup, and a trot which jarred your teeth loose and rattled the buttons off your tunic. However, she went to the railhead and Albert Edward mounted her, threw the clutch into the first speed and hammered out the ten miles to our camp, arriving smothered in snow and so stiff we had to lift him down, so raw it was a mockery to offer him a chair, and therefore he had to take his tea off the mantelpiece.

We advised a visit to Sandy. Sandy was the hot-bath merchant. He lurked in a dark barn at the end of the village, and could be found there at any time of any day, brooding over the black cauldrons in which the baths were brewed, his Tam-o'shanter drooped over one eye, steam condensing on his blue nose. Theoretically the hot baths were free, but in practice a franc pressed into Sandy's forepaw was found to have a strong calorific effect on the water.

So down the village on all fours, groaning like a Dutch brig in a cross sea, went our Albert Edward. He crawled into the dark barn and, having no smaller change, contributed a two-franc bill to the forepaw and told Sandy about his awful stiffness. His eloquence and the double fee broke Sandy's heart. With great tears in his eyes he assured Albert Edward that the utmost resources of his experience and establishment should be mobilised on his (Albert Edward's) behalf,

and ushered him tenderly into that hidden chamber, constructed of sacking screens, which was reserved for officers. Albert Edward peeled his clothes gingerly from him, and Sandy returned to his cauldrons.

The peeling complete, Albert Edward sat in the draughts of the inner chamber and waited for the bath. The outer chamber was filled with smoke, and the flames were leaping six feet above the cauldrons; but every time Albert Edward holloaed for his bath Sandy implored another minute's grace.

Finally Albert Edward could stand the draughts no longer and ordered Sandy, on pain of court martial and death, to bring the water, hot or not.

Whereupon Sandy reluctantly brought his buckets along, and, grumbling that neither his experience nor establishment had had a fair chance, emptied them into the tub. Albert Edward stepped in without further remark and sat down.

The rest of the story I had from my groom and countryman, who, along with an odd hundred other people, happened to be patronising the outer chamber tubs at the time. He told me that suddenly they heard "a yowl like a man that's afther bein' bit be a mad dog," and over the screen of the inner chamber came our Albert Edward in his birthday dress. "Took it in his sthride, Sor, an' coursed three laps round the bathhouse cursin' the way he'd wither the Divil," said my groom and countryman; "then he ran out of the door into the snow an' lay down in it." He likewise told me that Albert Edward's performance had caused

a profound sensation among the other bathers, and they inquired of Sandy as to the cause thereof; but Sandy shook his Tam-o' shanter and couldn't tell them; hadn't the vaguest idea. The water he had given Albert Edward was hardly scalding, he said; hardly scalding, with barely one packet of mustard dissolved in it.

Our Albert Edward is still taking his meals off the mantelpiece.

. . . . . .

I met my friend, the French battery commander, yesterday. He was cantering a showy chestnut mare over the turf, humming a tune aloud. He looked very fit and very much in love with the world. I asked him what he meant by it. He replied that he couldn't help it; everybody was combining to make him happy; his C.O. had fallen down a gun-pit and broken a leg; he had won two hundred francs from his pet enemy; he had discovered a jewel of a cook; and then there was always the Boche, the perfectly priceless, absolutely ridiculous, screamingly funny little Boche. The Boche, properly exploited, was a veritable fount of joy. He dreaded the end of the War, he assured me, for a world without Boches would be a salad sans the dressing.

I inquired as to how the arch-humorist had been excelling himself lately.

The Captain passaged his chestnut alongside my bay, chuckled and told me all about it. It appeared that one wet night he was rung up by the Infantry to say that the neighbouring Hun was up to some funny

business, and would he stand by for a barrage, please?

What sort of funny business was the Hun putting up?

Oh, a rocket had gone up over the way and they thought it was a signal for some frightfulness or other.

He stood by for half an hour, and then, as nothing happened, turned in. Ten minutes later the Infantry rang up again. More funny business; three rockets had gone up.

He stood by for an hour with no result, then sought his bunk once more, cursing all men. Confound the Infantry getting the jumps over a rocket or two! Confound them two times! Then a spark of inspiration glowed within him, glowed and flamed brightly. If his exalted *poilus* got the wind up over a handful of rockets, how much more also would the deteriorating Boche?

Gurgling happily, he brushed the rats off his chest and the beetles off his face, turned over and went to sleep. Next morning he wrote a letter to his "godmother" in Paris ("*une petite femme, très intelligente, vous savez*"), and ten days later her parcels came tumbling in. The first night (a Monday) he gave a modest display, red and white rockets bursting into green stars every five minutes. Tuesday night more rockets, with a few Catherine-wheels thrown in. Wednesday night, Catherine-wheels and golden rain, and so on until the end of the week, when they finished up with a grand special attraction and all-star programme, squibs, Catherine-wheels, Roman candles,

Prince of Wales' feathers, terminating in a blinding, fizzing barrage of coloured rockets, and "God bless our Home" in golden stars.

"All very pretty," said I, "but what were the results?"

"Precisely what I anticipated. A deserter came over yesterday who was through it all and didn't intend to go through it again. They had got the wind up properly, he said, hadn't had a wink of sleep for a week. His officers had scratched themselves bald-headed trying to guess what it was all about. All ranks stood to continuously, up to their waists in mud, frozen stiff and half drowned, while *my* brave little rogues of *poilus,* mark you, slept in their dug-outs, and the only man on duty was the lad who was touching the fireworks off. O friend of mine, there is much innocent fun to be got out of the Boche if you'll only give him a chance!"

IV

THE MESSLESS MESS

OUR mess was situated on the crest of a ridge, and enjoyed an uninterrupted view of rolling leagues of mud; it had the appearance of a packing-case floating on an ocean of ooze.

We and our servants, and our rats and our cockroaches, and our other bosom-companions slept in tents pitched round and about the mess.

The whole camp was connected with the outer world by a pathway of ammunition boxes, laid stepping-stonewise; we went to and fro, leaping from box to box as leaps the chamois from Alp to Alp. Should you miss your leap there would be a swirl of mud, a gulping noise, and that was the end of you; your sorrowing comrades shed a little chloride of lime over the spot where you were last seen, posted you as "Believed missing" and indented for another Second Lieutenant (or Field-Marshal, as the case might be).

Our mess was constructed of loosely piled shell boxes, and roofed by a tin lid. We stole the ingredients box by box, and erected the house with our own fair hands, so we loved it with parental love; but it had its little drawbacks. Whenever the field guns in our neighbourhood did any business, the tin lid rattled madly and the shell boxes jostled each other all over the place. It was

quite possible to leave our mess at peep o' day severely Gothic in design, and to return at dewy eve to find it rakishly Rococo.

William, our Transport Officer and Mess President, was everlastingly piping all hands on deck at unseemly hours to save the home and push it back into shape; we were householders in the fullest sense of the term.

Before the War, William assures us, he was a bright young thing, full of merry quips and jolly practical jokes, the life and soul of any party, but what with the contortions of the mess and the vagaries of the transport mules he had become a saddened man.

Between them—the mules and the mess—he never got a whole night in bed; either the mules were having bad dreams, sleep-walking into strange lines and getting themselves abhorred, or the field guns were on the job and the mess had the jumps. If Hans, the Hun, had not been the perfect little gentleman he is, and had dropped a shell anywhere near us (instead of assiduously spraying a distant ridge where nobody ever was, is, or will be) our mess would have been with Tyre and Sidon; but Hans never forgot himself for a moment; it was our own side we distrusted. The Heavies, for instance. The Heavies warped themselves laboriously into position behind our hill, disguised themselves as gooseberry bushes, and gave an impression of the crack of doom at 2 a.m. one snowy morning.

Our mess immediately broke out into St. Vitus's dance, and William piped all hands on deck.

The Skipper, picturesquely clad in boots (gum, high)

and a goat's skin, flung himself on the east wing, and became an animated buttress. Albert Edward climbed aloft and sat on the tin lid, which was opening and shutting at every pore. Mactavish put his shoulder to the south wall to keep it from working round to the north. I clung to the pantry, which was coming adrift from its parent stem, while William ran about everywhere, giving advice and falling over things. The mess passed rapidly through every style of architecture, from a Chinese pagoda to a Swiss chalêt, and was on the point of confusing itself with a Spanish castle when the Heavies switched off their hate and went to bed. And not a second too soon. Another moment and I should have dropped the pantry, Albert Edward would have been sea-sick, and the Skipper would have let the east wing go west.

We pushed the mess back into shape, and went inside it for a peg of something and a consultation. Next evening William called on the Heavies' commander and decoyed him up to dine. We regaled him with wassail and gramophone and explained the situation to him. The Lord of the Heavies, a charming fellow, nearly burst into tears when he heard of the ill he had unwittingly done us, and was led home by William at 1.30 a.m., swearing to withdraw his infernal machines, or beat them into ploughshares, the very next day. The very next night our mess, without any sort of preliminary warning, lost its balance, sat down with a crash, and lay littered about a quarter of an acre of ground. We all turned out and miserably surveyed the ruins. What

had done it? We couldn't guess. The field guns had gone to bye-bye, the Heavies had gone elsewhere. Hans, the Hun, couldn't have made a mistake and shelled us? Never! It was a mystery; so we all lifted up our voices and wailed for William. He was Mess President; it was his fault, of course.

At that moment William hove out of the night, driving his tent before him by bashing it with a mallet.

According to William there was one "Sunny Jim," a morbid transport mule, inside the tent, providing the motive power. "Sunny Jim" had always been something of a somnambulist, and this time he had sleepwalked clean through our mess and on into William's tent, where the mallet woke him up. He was then making the best of his way home to lines again, expedited by William and the mallet.

So now we are messless; now we crouch shivering in tents and talk lovingly of the good old times beneath our good old tin roof-tree, of the wonderful view of the mud we used to get from our window, and of the homely tune our shell boxes used to perform as they jostled together of a stormy night.

And sometimes, as we crouch shivering in our tents, we hear a strange sound stealing uphill from the lines. It is the mules laughing.

V.

CLIMATE AT THE FRONT

IF there is one man in France whom I do not envy it is the G.H.Q. Weather Prophet. I can picture the unfortunate wizard sitting in his bureau gazing into a crystal, *Old Moore's Almanack* in one hand, a piece of seaweed in the other, trying to guess what tricks the weather will be up to next.

For there is nothing this climate cannot do. As a quick-change artist it stands *sanspareil* (French) and *nulli secundus* (Latin).

And now it seems to have mislaid the Spring altogether. Summer has come at one stride. Yesterday the staff-cars smothered one with mud as they whirled past; to-day they choke one with dust. Yesterday the authorities were issuing precautions against frostbite; to-day they are issuing precautions against sunstroke. Nevertheless we are not complaining. It will take a lot of sunshine to kill us; we like it, and we don't mind saying so.

The B.E.F. has cast from it its mitts and jerkins and whale-oil, emerged from its subterranean burrows into the open, and in every wood a mushroom town of bivouacs has sprung up over-night. Here and there amateur gardeners have planted flower-beds before their tents; one of my corporals is nursing some radishes in

an ammunition box and talks crop prospects by the hour. My troop-sergeant found two palm plants in the ruins of a chateau glass-house, and now has them standing sentry at his bivouac entrance. He sits between them after evening stables, smoking his pipe and fancying himself back in Zanzibar; he expects the coker-nuts along about August, he tells me.

Summer has come, and on every slope graze herds of winter-worn gun horses and transport mules. The new grass has gone to the heads of the latter and they make continuous exhibitions of themselves, gambolling about like ungainly lambkins and roaring with unholy laughter. Summer has come, and my groom and countryman has started to whistle again, sure sign that Winter is over, for it is only during the Summer that he reconciles himself to the War. War, he admits, serves very well as a light gentlemanly diversion for the idle months, but with the first yellow leaf he grows restless and hints indirectly that both ourselves and the horses would be much better employed in the really serious business of showing the little foxes some sport back in our own green isle. "That Paddy," says he, slapping the bay with a hay wisp, "he wishes he was back in the county Kildare, he does so, the dear knows. Pegeen, too, if she would be hearin' the houn's shoutin' out on her from the kennels beyond in Jigginstown she'd dhrop down dead wid the pleasure wid'in her, an' that's the thrue word," says he, presenting the chestnut lady with a grimy army biscuit. "Och musha, the poor foolish cratures," he says and sighs.

However, Summer has arrived, and by the sound of his cheery whistle at early stables shrilling "Flannigan's Wedding," I understand that the horses are settling down once more and we can proceed with the battle.

If my groom and countryman is not an advocate of war as a winter sport, our Mr. Mactavish, on the other hand, is of the directly opposite opinion. "War," he murmured dreamily to me yesterday as we lay on our backs beneath a spreading parasol of apple-blossom and watched our troop-horses making pigs of themselves in the young clover—"war! don't mention the word to me. Maidenhead, Canader, cushions, cigarettes, only girl in the world doing all the heavy paddle-work—that's the game in the good ole summer-time. Call round again about October and I'll attend to your old war." It is fortunate that these gentlemen do not adorn any higher positions than those of private soldier and second lieutenant, else, between them, they would stop the War altogether and we should all be out of jobs.

VI

THE PADRE

YOU have all seen it in the latest V.C. list—"The Reverend Paul Grayne, Chaplain to the Forces, for conspicuous bravery and gallant example in the face of desperate circumstances."

You have all pictured him, the beau-ideal of muscular Christian, the Fighting Parson, eighteen hands high, terrific in wind and limb, with a golden mane and a Greek profile; a Pekinese in the drawing-room, a bull-dog in the arena; a soupçon of Saint Francis with a dash of John L. Sullivan—and all that.

But we who have met heroes know that they are very seldom of the type which achieves the immortality of the picture post card.

The stalwart with pearly teeth, lilac eyes and curly lashes is C3 at Lloyd's (Sir Francis), and may be heard twice daily at the Frivolity singing, "My Goo-goo Girl from Honolulu" to entranced flappers; while the lad who has Fritzie D. Hun backed on the ropes, clinching for time, is usually gifted with bow legs, freckles, a dented proboscis and a coiffure after the manner of a wire-haired terrier.

The Reverend Paul Grayne, v.c., sometime curate of Thorpington Parva, in the county of Hampshire, was no exception to this rule. Æsthetically he was a blot

on the landscape; among all the heroes I have met I never saw anything less heroically moulded.

He stood about five feet nought and tipped the beam at seven stone nothing. He had a mild chinless face, and his long beaky nose, round large spectacles, and trick of cocking his head sideways when conversing, gave him the appearance of an intelligent little dicky-bird.

I remember very well the occasion of our first meeting. I was in my troop lines one afternoon, blackguarding a farrier, when a loud nicker sounded on the road and a black cob, bearing a feebly protesting Padre upon his fat back, trotted through the gate, up to the lines and began to swop How d'y' do's with my hairies. The little Padre cocked his head on one side and oozed apologies from every pore.

He hadn't meant to intrude, he twittered; Peter had brought him; it was Peter's fault; Peter was very eccentric.

Peter, I gathered, was the fat cob, who by this time had butted into the lines and was tearing at a hay net as if he hadn't had a meal for years.

His alleged master looked at me hopeless, helpless. What was he to do? "Well, since Peter is evidently stopping to tea with my horses," said I, "the only thing you can do is to come to tea with us." So I lifted him down and bore him off to the cowshed inhabited by our mess at the time and regaled him on chlorinated Mazawattee, marmalade and dog biscuit. An hour later, Peter willing, he left us.

We saw a lot of the Padre after that. Peter, it appeared, had taken quite a fancy to us and frequently brought him round to meals. The Padre had no word of say in the matter. He confessed that, when he embarked upon Peter in the morning, he had not the vaguest idea where mid-day would find him. Nothing but the black cob's fortunate rule of going home to supper saved the Padre from being posted as a deserter.

He had an uneasy feeling that Peter would one day suddenly sicken of the War and that he would find himself in Paris or on the Riviera. We had an uneasy feeling that Peter would one day develop a curiosity as to the Boche horse rations, and stroll across the line, and we should lose the Padre, a thing we could ill afford to do, for by this time he had taken us under his wing spiritually and bodily. On Sundays he would appear in our midst dragging a folding harmonium and hold Church Parade, leading the hymns in his twittering bird-like voice.

Then the spinster ladies of his old parish of Thorpington Parva gave him a Ford car, and with this he scoured back areas for provisions and threaded his tin buggy in and out of columns of dusty infantry and clattering ammunition limbers, spectacles gleaming, cap slightly awry, while his batman (a wag) perched precariously atop of a rocking pile of biscuit tins, cigarette cases and boxes of tinned fruit, and shouted after the fashion of railway porters, "By your leave! Fags for the firin' line. Way for the Woodbine Express."

But if we saw a lot of the Padre it was the Antrims who looked upon him as their special property. They were line infantry, of the type which gets most of the work and none of the Press notices, a hard-bitten, unregenerate crowd, who cared not a whit whether Belgium bled or not, but loved fighting for its own sake and put their faith in bayonet and butt. And wherever these Antrims went, thither went the Padre also, harmonium and his Woodbines. I have a story that, when they were in a certain part of the line where the trenches were only thirty yards apart (so close indeed that the opposing forces greeted each other by their first names and borrowed one another's wiring tools), the Padre dragged the harmonium into the front line and held service there, and the Germans over the way joined lustily in the hymns. He kept the men of the Antrims going on canteen delicacies and their officers in a constant bubble of joy. He swallowed their tall stores without a gulp; they pulled one leg and he offered the other; he fell headlong into every silly trap they set for him. Also they achieved merit in other messes by peddling yarns of his wonderful innocence and his incredible absent-mindedness.

"Came to me yesterday, the Dicky Bird did," one of them would relate; "wanted advice about that fat fraud of his, Peter. 'He's got an abrasion on the knob of his right-hand front paw,' says he. 'Dicky Bird,' says I, 'that is no way to describe the anatomy of a horse after all the teaching I've given you.' 'I am so forgetful and horsy terms are so confusing,' he moans.

'Oh, I recollect now—his starboard ankle!' The dear babe!"

In the course of time the Antrims went into the Push, but on this occasion they refused to take the Padre with them, explaining that Pushes were noisy affairs, with messy accidents happening in even the best regulated battalions.

The Padre was up at midnight to see them go, his spectacles misty. They went over the bags at dawn, reached their objective in twenty minutes and scratched themselves in. The Padre rejoined them ten minutes later, very badly winded, but bringing a case of Woodbines along with him.

My friend Patrick grabbed him by the leg and dragged him into a shell-hole. Nothing but an inherent respect for his cloth restrained Patrick from giving the Dicky Bird the spanking of his life. At 8 a.m. the Hun countered heavily and hove the Antrims out. Patrick retreated in good order, leading the Padre by an ear. The Antrims sat down, licked their cuts, puffed some of the Woodbines, then went back and pitchforked the Boche in his tender spots. The Boche collected fresh help and bobbed up again. Business continued brisk all day, and when night fell the Antrims were left masters of the position.

At 1 a.m. they were relieved by the Rutland Rifles, and a dog-weary battered remnant of the battalion crawled back to camp in a sunken road a mile in the rear. One or two found bivouacs left by the Rutlands, but the majority dropped where they halted. My friend

Patrick found a bivouac, wormed into it and went to sleep. The next thing he remembers was the roof of his abode caving in with the weight of two men struggling violently. Patrick extricated himself somehow and rolled out into the grey dawn to find the sunken road filled with grey figures, in among the bivouacs and shell-holes, stabbing at the sleeping Antrims. Here and there men were locked together, struggling tooth and claw; the air was vibrant with a ghastly pandemonium of grunts and shrieks; the sunken road ran like a slaughter-house gutter. There was only one thing to do, and that was to get out, so Patrick did so, driving before him what men he could collect.

A man staggered past him, blowing like a walrus. It was the Padre's batman, and he had his master tucked under one arm, in his underclothes, kicking feebly.

Patrick halted his men beyond the hill crest, and there the Colonel joined him, trotting on his stockinged feet. Other officers arrived, herding men. "They must have rushed the Ruts., Sir," Patrick panted; "must be after those guns just behind us." "They'll get 'em too," said the Colonel grimly. "We can't stop 'em," said the Senior Captain. "If we counter at once we might give the Loamshires time to come up—they're in support, Sir—but—but, if they attack us, they'll get those guns—run right over us."

The Colonel nodded. "Man, I know, I know; but look at 'em"—he pointed to the pathetic remnant of his battalion lying out behind the crest—"they're dropping

asleep where they lie—they're beat to a finish—not another kick left in 'em."

He sat down and buried his face in his hands. The redoubtable Antrims had come to the end.

Suddenly came a shout from the Senior Captain, "Good Lord, what's that fellow after? Who the devil is it?"

They all turned and saw a tiny figure, clad only in underclothes, marching deliberately over the ridge towards the Germans.

"Who is it?" the Colonel repeated. "Beggin' your pardon, the Reverend, Sir," said the Padre's batman as he strode past the group of officers. "'E give me the slip, Sir. Gawd knows wot 'e's up to now." He lifted up his voice and wailed after his master, "'Ere, you come back this minute, Sir. You'll get yourself in trouble again. Do you 'ear me, Sir?" But the Padre apparently did not hear him, for he plodded steadily on his way. The batman gave a sob of despair and broke into a double.

The Colonel sprang to his feet. "Hey, stop him, somebody! Those swine'll shoot him in a second—child murder!"

Two subalterns ran forward, followed by a trio of N.C.O.'s. All along the line men lifted their weary heads from the ground and saw the tiny figure on the ridge silhouetted against the red east.

"Oo's that blinkin' fool?"

"The Padre."

"Wot's 'e doin' of?"

"Gawd knows."

A man rose to his knees, from his knees to his feet, and stumbled forward, mumbling, "'E give me a packet of fags when I was broke." "Me too," growled another, and followed his chum. "They'll shoot 'im in a minute," a voice shouted, suddenly frightened. "'Ere, this ain't war, this is blasted baby-killin'."

In another five seconds the whole line was up and jogging forward at a lurching double. "And a little child shall lead them," murmured the Colonel happily, as he put his best sock forwards; a miracle had happened, and his dear ruffians would go down in glory.

But as they topped the hill crest, came the shrill of a whistle from the opposite ridge, and there was half a battalion of the Rutlands back casting for the enemy that had broken through their posts. With wild yells both parties charged downwards into the sunken road.

When the tumult and shouting had died Patrick went in quest of the little Padre.

He discovered him sitting on the wreck of his bivouac of the night; he was clasping some small article to his bosom, and the look on his face was that of a man who had found his heart's desire.

Patrick sat himself down on a box of bombs, and looked humbly at the Reverend Paul. It is an awful thing for a man suddenly to find he has been entertaining a hero unawares.

"Oh, Dicky Bird, Dicky Bird, why did you do it?" he inquired softly.

The Padre cocked his head on one side and commenced to ooze apologies from every pore.

"Oh dear—you know how absurdly absent-minded I am; well, I suddenly remembered I had left my teeth behind."

VII

THE RIDING-MASTER

THE scene is a School of Instruction at the back of the Western Front set in a valley of green meadows bordered by files of plumy poplars, and threaded through by a silver ribbon of water.

On the lazy afternoon breeze come the concerted yells of a bayonet class, practising frightfulness further down the valley; also the staccato chatter of Lewis guns punching holes in the near hillside.

In the centre of one meadow is a turf *manège*. In the centre of the *manège* stands the villain of the piece, the Riding-Master.

He wears a crown on his sleeve, tight breeches, jack-boots, vicious spurs and sable moustachios. His right hand toys with a long, long whip, his left with his sable moustachios. He looks like Diavolo, the lion-tamer, about to put his man-eating chums through hoops of fire.

His victims, a dozen infantry officers, circle slowly round the *manège*. They are mounted on disillusioned cavalry horses who came out with Wellington and know a thing or two. Now and again they wink at the Riding-Master and he winks back at them.

The audience consists of an ancient Gaul in picturesque blue pants, whose *métier* is to totter round the meadows brushing flies off a piebald cow; the School

Padre, who keeps at long range so that he may see the sport without hearing the language, and ten little *gamins,* who have been splashing in the silver stream and are now sitting drying on the bank like ten little toads.

They come every afternoon, for never have they seen such fun, never since the great days before the War when the circus with the boxing kangaroo and the educated porks came to town.

Suddenly the Riding-Master clears his throat. At the sound thereof the horses cock their ears and their riders grab handfulls of leather and hair.

R.-M. "Now, gentlemen, mind the word. Gently away—tra-a-a-at." The horses break into a slow jog-trot and the cavaliers into a cold perspiration. The ten little *gamins* cheer delightedly.

R.-M. "Sit down, sit up, 'ollow yer backs, keep the hands down, backs foremost, even pace. Number Two, Sir, 'ollow yer back; don't sit 'unched up like you'd over-ate yourself. Number Seven, don't throw yerself about in that drunken manner, you'll miss the saddle altogether presently, coming down—can't expect the 'orse to catch you *every time.*

"Number Three, don't flap yer helbows like an 'en; you ain't laid an hegg, 'ave you?

"'Ollow yer backs, 'eads up, 'eels down; four feet from nose to croup.

"Number One, keep yer feet back, you'll be kickin' that mare's teeth out, you will.

"Come down off 'is 'ead, Number Seven; this ain't a monkey-'ouse.

"Keep a light an' even feelin' of both reins, backs of the 'ands foremost, four feet from nose to croup.

"Leggo that mare's tail, Number Seven; you're goin', not comin', and any'ow that mare likes to keep 'er tail to 'erself. You've upset 'er now, the tears is fair streamin' down 'er face—'ave a bit of feelin' for a pore dumb beast.

"'Ollow yer backs, even pace, grip with the knees, shorten yer reins, four feet from nose to croup. Number Eight, restrain yerself, me lad, restrain yerself, you ain't shadow-sparrin', you know.

"You too, Number Nine; if you don't calm yer action a bit you'll burst somethin'.

"Now, remember, a light feelin' of the right rein and pressure of the left leg. Ride—wa-a-alk! Ri'—tur-r-rn! 'Alt—'pare to s'mount—s'mount! Dismount, I said, Number Five; that means get down. No, don't dismount on the flat of yer back, me lad, it don't look nice. Try to remember you're an horfficer and be more dignified.

"Now listen to me while I enumerate the parts of a norse in language so simple any bloomin' fool can understand. This'll be useful to you, for if you ever 'ave a norse to deal with and he loses one of 'is parts you'll know 'ow to indent for a new one.

"The 'orse 'as two ends, a fore-end—so called from its tendency to go first, and an 'ind-end or rear rank. The 'orse is provided with two legs at each end, which

can be easily distinguished, the fore legs being straight and the 'ind legs 'avin' kinks in 'em.

"As the 'orse does seventy-five per cent of 'is dirty work with 'is 'ind-legs it is advisable to keep clear of 'em, rail 'em off or strap boxing-gloves on 'em. The legs of the 'orse is very delicate and liable to crock up, so do not try to trim off any unsightly knobs that may appear on them with a hand-axe—a little of that 'as been known to sour a norse for good.

"Next we come to the 'ead. On the south side of the 'ead we discover the mouth. The 'orse's mouth was constructed for mincing 'is victuals, also for 'is rider to 'ang on by. As the 'orse does the other forty-five per cent of 'is dirty work with 'is mouth it is advisable to stand clear of that as well. In fact, what with his mouth at one end and 'is 'ind-legs at t'other, the middle of the 'orse is about the only safe spot, and *that is why we place the saddle there.* Everything in the Harmy is done with a reason, gentlemen.

"And now, Number ten, tell me what coloured 'orse you are ridin'?

"A chestnut? No, 'e ain't no chestnut and never was, no, nor a raspberry roan neither; 'e's a bay. 'Ow often must I tell you that a chestnut 'orse is the colour of lager beer, a brown 'orse the colour of draught ale, and a black 'orse the colour of stout.

"And now, gentlemen, stan' to yer 'orses, 'pare to mount—mount!

"There you go, Number Seven, up one side and down the other. Try to stop in the saddle for a minute

if only for the view. You'll get yourself 'urted one of these days dashing about all over the 'orse like that; and s'posing you was to break your neck, who'd get into trouble? *Me,* not you. 'Ave a bit of consideration for other people, please.

"Now mind the word. Ride—ri'—tur-r-rn. Walk march. Tr-a-a-at. Helbows slightly brushing the ribs —*your* ribs, not the 'orse's, Number Three.

"Shorten yer reins, 'eels down, 'eads up, 'ollow yer backs, four feet from nose to croup.

"Get off that mare's neck, Number Seven, and try ridin' in the saddle for a change; it'll be more comfortable for everybody.

"You oughter do cowboy stunts for the movin' pictures, Number Six, you ought really. People would pay money to see you ride a norse upside down like that. Got a strain of wild Cossack blood in you, eh?

"There you are, now you've been and fell off. Nice way to repay me for all the patience an' learning I've given you!

"What are you lyin' there for? Day dreaming? I s'pose you're goin' to tell me you're 'urted now? Be writing 'ome to Mother about it next: 'Dear Ma,—A mad mustang 'as trod on me stummick. Please send me a gold stripe. Your loving child, Algy.'

"Now mind the word. Ride—can—ter!"

He cracks his whip; the horses throw up their heads and break into a canter; the cavaliers turn pea-green about the chops, let go the reins and clutch saddle-pommels.

The leading horse, a rakish chestnut, finding his head free at last and being heartily fed-up with the whole business, suddenly bolts out of the *manège* and legs it across the meadow, *en route* for stables and tea. His eleven mates stream in his wake, emptying saddles as they go.

The ten little *gamins* dance ecstatically upon the bank, waving their shirts and shrilling *"A Berlin! A Berlin!"*

The ancient Gaul props himself up against the piebald cow and shakes his ancient head. *"C'est la guerre,"* he croaks.

The deserted Riding-Master damns his eyes and blesses his soul for a few moments; then sighs resignedly, takes a cigarette from his cap lining, lights it and waddles off towards the village and his favourite *estaminet.*

VIII

NATIONAL ANTHEM

OUT here the telephone exists largely as a vehicle for the *jeux d'esprit* of the Brass Lids. It is a one-way affair, working only from the inside out, for if you have a trifle of repartee to impart to the Brazen Ones, the apparatus is either indefinitely engaged, or *Na poo* (as the French say). If you are one of these bulldog lads and are determined to make the thing talk from the outside in, you had better migrate *chez* Signals, taking your bed, blankets, beer, tobacco and the unexpired portion of next week's ration, and camp at the telephone orderly's elbow. After a day or two it will percolate through to the varlet's intelligence that you are a desperate dog in urgent need of something, and he will bestir himself, and mayhap in a further two or three days' time he will wind a crank, pull some strings, and announce that you are "on," and you will find yourself in animated conversation with an inspector of cemeteries, a jam expert at the Base, or the Dalai Lama. If you want to give back-chat to the Staff you had best take it there by hand.

A friend of mine by name of Patrick once got the job of Temporary Assistant Deputy Lance Staff Captain (unpaid), and before he tumbled to the one-way idea, his telephone worked both ways and gave him a

lot of trouble. People were always calling *him* up and asking *him* questions, which of course wasn't playing the game at all. Sometimes he never got to bed before 10 p.m., answering questions; often he was up again at 9 a.m., answering more questions—and such questions!

A sample. On one occasion he rang up his old battalion. One Jimmy was then Acting Assistant Vice-Adjutant. "Hello, wazzermatter?" said Jimmy. "Staff Captain speaking," said Patrick sternly. "Please furnish a return of all cooks, smoke-helmets, bombs, mules, Yukon packs, tin bowlers, grease-traps and Plymouth Brothers you have in the field!"

"Easy—beg pardon, yes, Sir," said Jimmy and hung up.

Presently the 'phone buzzed and there was Jimmy again.

"Excuse me, Sir, but you wanted a return of various commodities we have in the field. What field?"

"Oh, the field of Mars, fat-head!" Patrick snapped and rang off. A quarter of an hour later he was called to the 'phone once more and the familiar bleat of Jimmy tickled his ear. "Excuse me, Sir—whose mother?"

On the other hand the great Brass Hat is human and makes a slip, a clerical error, now and again, sufficient to expose his flank. And then the humble fighting man can draw his drop of blood if he is quick about it. To this same long-suffering Jimmy was vouchsafed the heaven-sent opportunity, and he leapt at it. He got a chit from H.Q., dated 6/7/17, which ran thus:—

"In reference to 17326 Pte. Hogan we note that his date of birth is 10/7/17. Please place him in his proper category."

To which Jimmy replied:—

"As according to your showing 17326 Pte. Hogan will not be born for another four days we are placed in a position of some difficulty.

Signed ———

"P.S.—What if, when the interesting event occurs 17326 Pte. Hogan should be a girl?

"P.S.S.—Or twins?"

Our Albert Edward is just back from one of those Army finishing schools where the young subaltern's knowledge of Shakespeare and the use of the globes is given a final shampoo before he is pushed over the top. Albert Edward's academy was situated in a small town where schools are maintained by all our brave Allies; it is an educational centre. The French school does the honours of the place and keeps a tame band, which gives tongue every Sunday evening in the Grand Place. Thither repair all the young ladies of the town to hear the music. Thither also repair all the young subalterns, also for the purpose of hearing the music.

At the end of every performance the national anthems of all our brave Allies are played, each brave Ally standing rigidly to attention the while, in compliment to the others. As we have a lot of brave Allies these days, all with long national war-whoops, this becomes somewhat of a strain.

One morning the French bandmaster called on the Commandant of the English school.

"Some Americans have arrived," said he. "They are naturally as welcome as the sunshine, but" (he sighed) "it means yet another national anthem."

The Commandant sighed and said he supposed so.

"By the way," said the *chef d'orchestre,* "what is the American national anthem?"

"'Yankee Doodle,'" replied the Commandant.

The Chief Instructor said he'd always understood it was "Hail, Columbia."

The Adjutant was of the opinion that "The Star-Spangled Banner" filled the bill, while the Quartermaster cast his vote for "My Country, 'tis of thee."

The *chef d'orchestre* thrashed his bosom and rent his coiffure. "*Dieu!*" he wailed, "I can't play all of them —*figurez-vous!*"

Without stopping to do any figuring they heartily agreed that he couldn't. "Tell you what," said the Commandant at length, "write to your music merchant in Paris and leave it to him."

The *chef d'orchestre* said he would, and did so.

Next Sunday evening, as the concert drew to a close, the band flung into the *Marseillaise,* and the subalterns of all nations leapt to attention. They stood to attention through "God Save the King," through the national anthems of Russia, Italy, Portugal, Rumania, Serbia, Belgium, Montenegro and Monte Carlo, all our brave Allies. Then the *chef d'orchestre* suddenly sprang upon a stool and waved above his head the stripes and

stars of our newest brave Ally, while the band crashed into the opening strains of "When the midnight choo-choo starts for Alabam." It speaks volumes for the discipline of the Allied armies that their young subalterns stood to attention even through that.

IX

HORSE SENSE

Time—Night

Scene.—*A shell-pitted plain and a cavalry regiment under canvas thereon. It is not yet "Lights out," and on the right hand the semi-transparent tents and bivouacs glow like giant Chinese lanterns inhabited by shadow figures. From an Officers' mess tent comes the twinkle of a gramophone, rendering classics from "Keep Smiling." In a bivouac an opposition mouth-organ saws at "The Rosary." On the left hand is a dark mass of horses, picketed in parallel lines. They lounge, hips drooping, heads low, in a pleasant after-dinner doze. The Guard lolls against a post, lantern at his feet, droning a fitful accompaniment to the distant mouth-organ. "The hours I spent wiv thee, dear 'eart, are—Stan' still, Ginger—like a string of pearls ter me—ee . . . Grrr, Nellie, stop kickin'!" The range of desolate hills in the background is flickering with gun-flashes and grumbling with drum-fire —the Boche evensong.*

A bay horse (*shifting his weight from one leg to the other*). Somebody's catching it in the neck to-night.

A chestnut. Yep. Now if this was 1914, with that racket loose, we'd be standing to.

A gunpack horse. Why?

Chestnut. Wind up, sonny. Why in 1914 our saddles grew into our backs like the ivy and the oak. In 1914——

A black horse. Oh, dry up about 1914, old soldier; tell us about the Battle of Hastings and how you came to let William's own Mounted Blunderbusses run all over you.

A bay horse. Yes, and how you gave the field ten stone and a beating in the retreat to Corunna. What are your personal recollections of Napoleon, Rufus?

Chestnut. You blinkin' conscripts, you!

Black. Shiss! no bad language, Rufus—ladies present.

Chestnut. Ladies, huh. Behave nice and ladylike when they catch sight of the nosebags, don't they?

A skewbald mare. Well, we gotta stand up for our rights.

Chestnut. 'Struth you do, tooth and hoof. What were you in civil life, Baby? A Suffragette?

Skewbald. No, I wasn't, so there.

Bay. No, she was a footlights favourite; wore her mane in plaits and a star-spangled bearing-rein and surcingle to improve her fig-u-are; did pretty parlour tricks to the strains of the banjo and psaltery. *N'est-ce pas, chérie?*

Skewbald. Well, what if I did? There's scores of

circus gals is puffect lydies. I don't require none of your familiarity any'ow, Mister.

Bay. Beg pardon. Excuse my bluff soldierly ways; but nevertheless take your nose out of my hay net, please.

A Canadian dun. Gee! quit weavin' about like that, Tubby. Can't you let a guy get some sleep. I'll hand you a cold rebuff in the ribs in a minute. Wazzer matter with you, anyhow?

Tubby. Had a bad dream.

Black. Don't wonder, the way you over-eat yourself.

Bay. Ever know a Quartermaster's horse that didn't? He's the only one that gets the chance.

Skewbald. And the Officers' chargers.

Voice from over the way. Well, we need it, don't we? We do all the bally headwork.

Bay. Hearken even unto the Honourable Montmorency. Hello, Monty there! Never mind about the bally headwork, but next time you're out troop-leading try to steer a course somewhat approaching the straight. You had the line opening and shutting like a concertina this morning.

An iron-grey. Begob, and that's the holy truth! I thought my ribs was goin' ivery minnut, an' me man was cursin' undher his breath the way you'd hear him a mile away. Ye've no more idea of a straight line, Monty avic, than a crab wid dhrink taken.

Monty. Sorry, but the flies were giving me gyp.

Canadian dun. Flies? Say, but you greenhorns make me smile. Why, out West we got flies that——

Iron grey. Och sure we've heard all about thim.

'Tis as big as bulldogs they are; ivery time they bite you you lose a limb. Many a time the traveller has observed thim flyin' away wid a foal in their jaws, the rapparees! F' all that I do be remarkin' that whin one of the effete European variety is afther ticklin' you in the short hairs you step very free an' flippant, Johnny, acushla.

A brown horse. Say, Monty, old top, any news? You've got a pal at G.H.Q., haven't you?

Monty. Oh, yes, my young brother. He's got a job on Haig's personal Staff now, wears a red brow-band and all that—ahem! Of course he tells me a thing or two when we meet, but in the strictest confidence, you understand.

Brown. Quite; but did he say anything about the end of the War?

Monty. Well, not precisely, that is not exactly, excepting that he says that it's pretty certain now that it —er—well, that it will end.

Brown. That's good news. Thanks, Monty.

Monty. Not a bit, old thing. Don't mention it.

Iron-grey. 'Tis a great comfort to us to know that the War will ind, if not in our day, annyway sometime.

Canadian dun. You bet. Gee, I wish it was all over an' I was home in the foothills with the brown wool and pink prairie roses underfoot. and the Chinook layin' my mane over.

Iron-grey. Faith, but the County Cork would suit me completely; a roomy loose-box wid straw litter an' a leak-proof roof.

Tubby. Yes, with full meals coming regularly.

A bay mare. I've got a two-year-old in Devon I'd like to see again.

Monty. I've no quarrel with Leicestershire myself.

Gunpack horse. Garn! Wot abaht good old London?

Chestnut. Steady, Alf, what are you grousing about? You never had a full meal in your life until Lord Derby pulled you out of that coster barrow and pushed you into the Army.

Tubby. A full meal in the Army—help!

Brown. Listen to our living skeleton. Do you chaps remember that afternoon he had to himself in an oat field up Plug Street way? When the grooms found him he was lying on his back, legs in the air, blown up like a poisoned pup. "Blimy," says one lad to t'other, "'ere's one of our observation bladders the 'Un 'as brought down."

Chestnut. I heard the Officer boy telling the Troop Sergeant that he'd buy a haystack some day and try to burst you, Tubby. The Sergeant bet him a month's pay it couldn't be done.

Tubby. Just because I've got a healthy appetite——

Brown. Healthy appetites aren't being worn this season, Sir—bad form. How are the politicians' park hacks to be kept sleek if the troop-horse don't tighten his girth a bit? Be patriotic, old dear; eat less oats.

Chestnut. That mess gramophone must be redhot by now. It's been running continuous since First Post. I suppose somebody's mamma has sent him a bottle of

ginger-pop, and they're seeing life while the bubbles last.

Monty. Yes, and I suppose my young gentleman will be parading to-morrow morning with a *camouflage* tunic over his pyjamas, looking to me to pull him through squadron drill.

Iron-grey. God save us, thin!

A Mexican roan. Buenas noches!

Gunpack horse. Hish! Orderly Officer. 'E's in the Fourth Troop lines nah; you can 'ear 'im cursin' as he trips over the heel shackles.

Monty. Hush, you fellows. Orderly Officer. *Bong swar.*

. . . . . .

Once more heads and hips droop. They pose in attitudes of sleep like a dormitory of small boys on the approach of a prefect. The line Guard comes to life, seizes his lantern and commences to march up and down as if salvation depended on his getting in so many laps to the hour. From the guard-tent a trumpet wails, "Lights out."

X

"CONVEY," THE WISE IT CALL

I AM living at present in one of those villages in which the retreating Hun has left no stone unturned. With characteristic thoroughness he fired it first, then blew it up, and has been shelling it ever since. What with one thing and another, it is in an advanced state of dilapidation; in fact, if it were not that one has the map's word for it, and a notice perched on a heap of brick-dust saying that the Town Major may be found within, the casual wayfarer might imagine himself in the Sahara, Kalahari, or the south end of Kingsway.

Some of these French towns are very difficult to recognise as such; only the trained detective can do it. A certain Irish regiment was presented with the job of capturing one. The scheme was roughly this. They were to climb the parapet at 5.25 a.m. and rush a quarry some one hundred yards distant. After half an hour's breather they were to go on to some machine-gun emplacements, dispose of these, wait a further twenty minutes, and then take the town. Distance barely one thousand yards in all. Promptly at zero the whole field spilled over the bags, as the field spills over the big double at Punchestown, paused at the quarry only long enough to change feet on the top, and charged yelling at the machine-guns. Then being still full of fun and

joie de vivre, and having no officers left to hamper their fine flowing style, they ducked through their own barrage and raced all out for the final objective. Twenty minutes later, two miles further on, one perspiring private turned to his panting chum, "For the love of God, Mike, aren't we getting in the near of this damn town yet?"

I have a vast respect for Hindenburg (a man who can drink the mixtures he does, and still sit up and smile sunnily into the jaws of a camera ten times a day, is worthy of anybody's veneration), but if he thought that by blowing these poor little French villages into small smithereens he would deprive the B.E.F. of head-cover and cause it to catch cold and trot home to mother, he will have to sit up late and do some more thinking. For Atkins of to-day is a knowing bird; he can make a little go the whole distance and conjure plenty out of nothingness. As for cover, two bricks and his shrapnel hat make a very passable pavilion. Goodness knows it would puzzle a guinea-pig to render itself inconspicuous in our village, yet I have watched battalion after battalion march into it and be halted and dismissed. Half an hour later there is not a soul to be seen. They have all gone to ground. My groom and countryman went in search of wherewithal to build a shelter for the horses. He saw a respectable plank sticking out of a heap of débris, laid hold on it and pulled. Then—to quote him *verbatim*—"there came a great roarin' from in undernath of it, Sor, an' a black divil of an infantryman shoved his head up through the bricks an' drew down

sivin curses on me for pullin' the roof off his house. Then he's afther throwin' a bomb at me, Sor, so I came away. Ye wouldn't be knowin' where to put your fut down in this place, Sor, for the dhread of treadin' in the belly of an officer an' him aslape."

Some people have the bungalow mania and build them *bijoux maisonettes* out of biscuit tins, sacking and whatnot, but the majority go to ground. I am one of the majority; I go to ground like a badger, for experience has taught me that a dug-out—cramped, damp, dark though it may be—cannot be stolen from you while you sleep; that is to say, thieves cannot come along in the middle of the night, dig it up bodily by the roots and cart it away in a G.S. waggon without you, the occupant, being aware that some irregularity is occurring to the home. On the other hand, in this country, where the warrior, when he falls on sleep suffers a sort of temporary death, bungalows can be easily purloined from round about him without his knowledge; and what is more, frequently are.

For instance, a certain bungalow in our village was stolen as frequently as three times in one night. This was the way of it. One Todd, a foot-slogging lieutenant, foot-slogged into our midst one day, borrowed a hole from a local rabbit, and took up his residence therein. Now this mud-pushing Todd had a cousin in the same division, one of those highly trained specialists who trickle about the country shedding coils of barbed wire and calling them "dumps"—a sapper, in short. One afternoon the sapping Todd, finding some old sheets of

corrugated iron that he had neglected to dump, sent them over to his gravel-grinding cousin with his love and the request of a loan of a dozen of soda. The earth-pounding Todd came out of his hole, gazed on the corrugated iron and saw visions, dreamed dreams. He handed the hole back to the rabbit and set to work to evolve a bungalow. By evening it was complete. He crawled within and went to sleep, slept like a drugged dormouse. At 10 p.m. a squadron of the Shetland ponies (for the purpose of deceiving the enemy all names in this article are entirely fictitious) made our village. It was drizzling at the time, and the Field Officer in charge was getting most of it in the neck. He howled for his batman, and told the varlet that if there wasn't a drizzle-proof bivouac ready to enfold him by the time he had put the ponies to bye-byes, there would be no leave for ten years. The batman scratched his head, then slid softly away into the night. By the time the ponies were tilting the last drops out of their nosebags the faithful servant had scratched together a few sheets of corrugated, and piled them into a rough shelter. The Major wriggled beneath it and was presently putting up a barrage of snores terrible to hear. At midnight a battalion of the Loamshire Light Infantry trudged into the village. It was raining in solid chunks, and the Colonel Commanding looked like Victoria Falls and felt like a submarine. He gave expression to his sentiments in a series of spluttering bellows. His batman trembled and faded into the darkness *à pas de loup*. By the time the old gentleman had halted his command

and cursed them "good night" his resourceful retainer had found a sheet or two of corrugated iron somewhere and assembled them into some sort of bivouac for the reception of his lord. His lord fell inside, kicked off his boots and slept instantly, slept like a wintering bear.

At 2 a.m. three Canadian privates blundered against our village and tripped over it. They had lost their way, were mud from hoofs to horns, dead beat, soaked to the skin, chilled to the bone, fed up to the back teeth. They were not going any further, neither were they going to be deluged to death if there was any cover to be had anywhere. They nosed about, and soon discovered a few sheets of corrugated iron, bore them privily hence and weathered the night out under some logs further down the valley. My batman trod me underfoot at seven next morning. "Goin' to be blinkin' murder done in this camp presently, Sir," he announced cheerfully. "Three officers went to sleep in bivvies larst night, but somebody's souvenired 'em since, an' they're all lyin' hout in the hopen now, Sir. Their blokes daresent wake 'em an' break the noos. All very 'asty-tempered gents, so I'm told. The Colonel is pertickler mustard. There'll be some fresh faces on the Roll of Honour when 'e comes to."

I turned out and took a look at the scene of impending tragedy. The three unconscious officers on three camp beds were lying out in the middle of a sea of mud like three lone islets. Their shuddering subordinates were taking cover at long range, whispering among themselves and crouching in attitudes of dread-

ful expectancy like men awaiting the explosion of a mine or the cracking of Doom. As explosions of those dimensions are liable to be impartial in their attentions I took horse and rode afield. But according to my batman, who braved it out, the Lieutenant woke up first, exploded noisily and detonated the Field Officer who in turn detonated the Colonel. In the words of my batman—"They went orf one, two, three, Sir, for orl the world like a machine-gun, an eighteen-pounder and an How-pop-pop! Whizz-bang! Boom!—very 'eavy casu-alities, Sir."

XI

OUR MESS PRESIDENT

NOBODY out here seems exactly infatuated with the politicians nowadays. The Front Trenches have about as much use for the Front Benches as a big-game hunter for mosquitoes. The bayonet professor indicates his row of dummies and says to his lads, "Just imagine they are Cabinet Ministers—go!" and in a clock-tick the heavens are raining shreds of sacking and particles of straw. The demon bomber fancies some prominent Parliamentarian is lurking in the opposite sap, grits his teeth, and gets an extra five yards into his bowling.

But I am not entirely of the vulgar opinion. The finished politician may not be a subject for odes, but a political education is a great asset to any man. Our Mess President, William, once assisted a friend to lose a parliamentary election, and his experience has been invaluable to us. The moment we are tired of fighting and want billets, the Squadron sits down where it is and the Skipper passes the word along for William. William dusts his boots, adjusts his tie and heads for the most prepossessing farm in sight. Arrived there, he takes off his hat to the dog, pats the pig, asks the cow after the calf, salutes the farmer, curtsies to the farmeress, then turning to the inevitable baby, exclaims in the language of the country, "Mong Jew, kell jolly ong-

fong" (Gosh, what a topping kid!), and bending tenderly over it imprints a lingering kiss upon its india-rubber features and wins the freedom of the farm. The Mess may make use of the kitchen; the spare bed is at the Skipper's disposal; the cow will move up and make room for the First Mate; the pig will be only too happy to welcome the Subalterns to its modest abode.

Ordinary billeting officers stand no chance against our William and his political education. "That fellow," I heard one disgruntled competitor remark to him, "would hug the devil for a knob of coke." Once only did he meet his match, and a battle of Titans resulted.

In pursuit of his business he entered a certain farmhouse, to find the baby already in possession of another officer, a heavy red creature with a monocle, who was rocking the infant's cradle seventy-five revolutions per minute and making dulcet noises on a moustache comb.

William's heart fell to his field boots; he recognised the red creature's markings immediately. This was another politician; no bloodless victory would be his; fur would fly first, powder burn—Wow!

The red person must have tumbled to William as well, for he increased the revolutions to one hundred and forty per minute and broke into a shrill lullaby of his own impromptu composition:

"Go to sleep, Mummy's liddle Did-ums;
Go to sleep, Daddy's liddle Thing-me-jig."

Nevertheless this did not baffle our William. He approached from a flank, deftly twitched the infant out of its cradle by the scruff of its neck, and commenced to plaster it with tender kisses. However the red man tailed it as it went past and hung on, kissing any bits he could reach. When the mother reappeared they were worrying the baby between them as a couple of hound puppies worry the hind leg of a cub. She beat them faithfully with a broom and hove both of them out into the wide wet world, and we all slept in a bog that night, and William was much abused and loathed. But that was his only failure.

If getting billets is William's job, getting rid of them is the Babe's affair. William, like myself, has far too great a mastery of the *patois* to handle delicate situations with success. For instance, when the farmer approaches me with tidings that my troopers have burnt two ploughshares and a crowbar, and my troop-horses have masticated a brick wall, I engage him in palaver, with the result that we eventually part, I under the impression that the incident is closed, and he under the impression that I have promised to buy him a new farm. This leads to all sorts of international complications.

The Babe, on the other hand, regards a knowledge of French as immoral and only knows enough of it to order himself a drink. He is also gifted with a slight stutter, which under the stress of a foreign language becomes chronic. So when we evacuate a billet William furnishes the Babe with enough money to compensate the farmer for all damages we have not committed, and then

effaces himself. Donning a bright smile the Babe approaches the farmer and presses the lucre into his honest palm.

"Hi," says the worthy fellow, "what is this, then? One hundred francs! Where is the seventy-four francs, six centimes for the fleas your dog stole? The two hundred francs, three centimes for the indigestion your rations gave my pig? The eight thousand and ninety-nine francs, five centimes insurance money I should have collected if your brigands had not stopped my barn from burning?—and all the other little damages, three million, eight hundred thousand and forty-four francs, one centime in all—where is it, *hein?*"

"Ec-c-coutez une moment," the Babe begins. "Jer p-p-poovay expliquay tut—tut—tut—tut—sh-sh-shiss——" says he, loosening his stammer at rapid fire, popping and hissing, rushing and hitching like a red-hot machine-gun with a siphon attachment. In five minutes the farmer is white in the face and imploring the Babe to let bygones be bygones. "N-n-not a b-bit of it, old t-top," says the Babe. "Jer p-p-poovay exp-p-pliquay b-b-bub-bub-bub——" and away it goes again like a combined steam riveter and shower bath, like the water coming down at Lodore. No farmer however hardy has been known to stand more than twenty minutes of this. A quarter of an hour usually sees him bolting and barring himself into the cellar, with the Babe blowing him kisses of fond farewell through the key-hole.

We are billeted on a farm at the present moment.

The Skipper occupies the best bed; the rest of us are doing the *al fresco* touch in tents and bivouacs scattered about the surrounding landscape. We are on very intimate terms with the genial farmyard folk. Every morning I awake to find half a dozen hens and their gentleman friend roosting along my anatomy. One of the hens laid an egg in my ear this morning. William says she mistook it for her nest, but I take it the hen, as an honest bird, was merely paying rent for the roost.

The Babe turned up at breakfast this morning wearing only half a moustache. He said a goat had browsed off the other half while he slept. The poor beast has been having fits of giggles ever since—a moustache must be very ticklish to digest.

Yesterday MacTavish, while engaged in taking his tub in the open, noticed that his bath-water was mysteriously sinking lower and lower. Turning round to investigate the cause of the phenomenon he beheld a gentle milch privily sucking it up behind his back. There was a strong flavour of Coal Tar soap in the *café au lait* to-day.

This morning at dawn I was aroused by a cold foot pawing at my face. Blinking awake, I observed Albert Edward in rosy pyjamas capering beside my bed. "Show a leg, quick," he whispered. "Rouse out, and Uncle will show boysey pretty picture."

Brushing aside the coverlet of fowl, I followed him tiptoe across the dewy mead to the tarpaulin which he and MacTavish call "home."

Albert Edward lifted a flap and signed me to peep

within. It was, as he had promised, a pretty picture.

At the foot of our MacTavish's mattress, under a spare blanket lifted from that warrior in his sleep, lay a large pink pig. Both were occupied in peaceful and stertorous repose.

"Heads of Angels, by Sir Joshua Reynolds," breathed Albert Edward in my ear.

XII

FUNNY CUTS

ALL the world has marvelled at "the irrepressible good humour" of old Atkins. Every distinguished tripper who comes Cook's touring to the Front for a couple of days devotes at least a chapter of his resultant book to it. "How in thunder does Thomas do it?" they ask. "What the mischief does he find to laugh at?" Listen.

Years ago, when the well-known War was young, a great man sat in his sanctum exercising his grey matter. He said to himself, "There is a war on. Men, amounting to several, will be prised loose from comfortable surroundings and condemned to get on with it for the term of their unnatural lives. They will be shelled, gassed, mined and bombed, smothered in mud, worked to the bone, bored stiff and scared silly. Fatigues will be unending, rations short, rum diluted, reliefs late and leave nil. Their girls will forsake them for diamond-studded munitioneers. Their wives will write saying, 'Little Jimmie has the mumps; and what about the rent? You aren't spending all of five bob a week on yourself, are you?' This is but a tithe (or else a tittle) of the things that will occur to them, and their sunny natures will sour and sicken if something isn't done about it."

The great man sat up all night chewing penholders and pondering on the problem. The Big Idea came with the end of the eighth penholder.

He sprang to his feet, fires of inspiration flashing from his eyes, and boomed, "Let there be *Funny Cuts!*"—then went to bed. Next morning he created "I." (which stands for Intelligence), carefully selected his Staff, arrayed them in tabs of appropriate hue, and told them to go the limit. And they have been going it faithfully ever since. What the Marines are to the Senior Service, "I." is to us. Should a Subaltern come in with the yarn that the spook of Hindenburg accosted him at Bloody Corner and offered him a cigar, or a balloon cherub buttonhole you with the story of a Boche tank fitted with rubber tyres, C-springs and hot and cold water, that he has seen climbing trees behind St. Quentin, we retort, "Oh, go and tell it to 'I.'" and then sit back and see what the inspired official organ of the green tabs will make of it. A hint is as good as a wink to them, a nudge ample. Under the genius of these imaginative artists the most trivial incident bourgeons forth into a Le Queux spell-binder, and the whole British Army, mustering about its Sergeant-Majors, gets selected cameos read to it every morning at roll-call, laughs brokenly into the jaws of dawn and continues chuckling to itself all day. Now you know.

Our Adjutant had a telephone call not long ago. "Army speaking," said a voice. "Will you send somebody over to Courcelles and see if there is a Town Major there?"

The Adjutant said he would, and a N.C.O. was despatched forthwith. He returned later, reporting no symptoms of one, so the Adjutant rang up Exchange and asked to be hooked on to Army Headquarters. "Which branch?" Exchange inquired. "Why, really I don't know—forgot to ask," the Adjutant confessed. "I'll have a try at 'A.'"

"Hello," said "A." "There is no Town Major at Courcelles," said the Adjutant. "You astound me, Fair Unknown," said "A."; "but what about it, anyway?" The Adjutant apologised and asked Exchange for "Q." department. "Hello," said "Q." "There is no Town Major at Courcelles," said the Adjutant. "Sorry, old thing, whoever you are," said "Q.," "but we don't stock 'em. Rations, iron; perspirators, box; oil, whale, delivered with promptitude and civility, but *not* Town Majors—sorry." The Adjutant sighed and consulted with Exchange as to who possibly could have rung him up.

Exchange couldn't guess unless it was "I."—no harm in trying, anyhow.

"Hello!" said "I." "There is no Town Major at Courcelles," the Adjutant droned somewhat wearily. "Wha-t!" "I." exclaimed, suddenly interested. "Say it again, clearer." "Cour-celles—No—Town—Major," the Adjutant repeated. There was a pause; then he heard the somebody give off an awed "Good Lord!" and drop the receiver. Next morning in *Funny Cuts* (the organ of Intelligence) we learned that "*Corps* Headquarters was heavily *Shelled* last night. The

Town Major is missing. This is evidence that the enemy has brought long-range guns into the opposite sector." Followed masses of information as to the probable make of the guns, the size of shell they preferred, the life-story of the Battery Commander, his favourite flower and author.

The Boche, always on the alert to snaffle the paying devices of an opposition firm, now has his "I." staff and *Funny Cuts* as well. From time to time we capture a copy and read this sort of thing:

"From agonised screeches heard by one of our intrepid airmen while patrolling over the enemy's lines yesterday, it is evident that the brutal and relentless British are bayoneting their prisoners."

A Highland Division, whose star pipers were holding a dirge and lament contest on that date, are now ticking off the hours to the next offensive.

The Antrims had a *cordon bleu* by the name of Michael O'Callagan. He was a sturdy rogue, having retreated all the way from Mons, and subsequently advanced all the way back to the Yser with a huge stock-pot on his back, from which he had furnished mysterious stews to all comers, at all hours, under any conditions. For this, and for the fact that he could cook under water, and would turn out hot meals when other *chefs* were committing suicide, much was forgiven him, but he was prone to look upon the *vin* when it was *rouge* and was habitually coated an inch thick with a varnish of soot and pot-black. One morning he calmly hove himself over the parapet and, in spite of the earnest at-

tentions of Hun snipers, remained there long enough to collect sufficient débris to boil his dixies. Next day the Boche *Funny Cuts* flared forth scareheads:

"Savages on the Somme.

"The desperate and unprincipled British are employing black cannibal Zulus in the defence of their system. Yesterday one of them, a chief of incredibly depraved appearance, was observed scouting in the open."

The communiqué ended with a treatise on the Zulu, its black man-eating habits, and an exhortation to "our old Brandenburgers" not to be dismayed.

XIII

LEAVE

THE Babe went to England on leave. Not that this was any new experience for him; he usually pulled it off every twelve months—influence, and that sort of thing, you know. He went down to the coast in a carriage containing seventeen other men, but he got a fat sleepy youth to sit on, and was passably comfortable. He crossed over in a wobbly boat packed from cellar to attic with Red Tabs invalided with shell shock, Blue Tabs with trench fever, and Green Tabs with brain-fag; Mechanical Transporters in spurs and stocks, jam merchants in revolvers and bowie-knives, Military Police festooned with *pickelhaubes,* and here and there a furtive fighting man who had got away by mistake, and would be recalled as soon as he landed.

The leave train rolled into Victoria late in the afternoon. Cab touts buzzed about the Babe, but he would have none of them; he would go afoot the better to see the sights of the village—a leisurely sentimental pilgrimage. He had not covered one hundred yards when a ducky little thing pranced up to him, squeaking, "Where are your gloves, Sir?" "I always put 'em in cold storage during summer along with my muff and boa, dear," the Babe replied pleasantly. "Moreover, my mother doesn't like me to talk to strangers in the streets,

so ta-ta." The little creature blushed like a tea-rose and stamped its little hoof. "Insolence!" it squeaked. "You—you go back to France by the next boat!" and the Babe perceived to his horror that he had been witty to an Assistant Provost-Marshal! He flung himself down on his knees, licking the A.P.M.'s boots and crying in a loud voice that he would be good and never do it again.

The A.P.M. pardoned the Babe (he wanted to save the polish on his boots) on condition that he immediately purchased a pair of gloves of the official cut and hue. The Babe did so forthwith and continued on his way. He had not continued ten yards when another A.P.M. tripped him up. "That cap is a disgrace, Sir!" he barked. "I know it, Sir," the Babe admitted, "and I'm awfully sorry about it; but that hole in it only arrived last night—shrapnel, you know—and I haven't had time to buy another yet. I don't care for the style they sell in those little French shops—do you?"

The A.P.M. didn't know anything about France or its little shops, and didn't intend to investigate; at any rate not while there was a war on there. "You will return to the Front to-morrow," said he. The Babe grasped his hand from him and shook it warmly. "Thank you—thank you, Sir," he gushed; "I didn't want to come, but they made me. I'm from Fiji; have no friends here, and London is somehow so different from Suva it makes my head ache. I am broke and couldn't afford leave, anyway. Thank you, Sir—thank you."

"Ahem—in that case I will revoke my decision," said the A.P.M. "Buy yourself an officially-sanctioned cap and carry on."

The Babe bought one with alacrity; then, having tasted enough of the dangers of the streets for one afternoon, took a taxi, and, lying in the bottom, well out of sight, sped to his old hotel. When he reached his old hotel he found it had changed during his absence, and was now headquarters of the Director of Bones and Dripping. He abused the taxi-driver, who said he was sorry, but there was no telling these days; a hotel was a hotel one moment, and the next it was something entirely different. Motion pictures weren't in it, he said.

Finally they discovered a hotel which was still behaving as such, and the Babe got a room. He remained in that room all the evening, beneath the bed, having his meals pushed in to him under the door. A prowling A.P.M. sniffed at the keyhole, but did not investigate further, which was fortunate for the Babe, who had no regulation pyjamas.

Next morning, crouched on the bottom boards of another taxi, he was taken to his tailor, poured himself into the faithful fellow's hands, and only departed when guaranteed to be absolutely A.P.M.-proof. He went to the "Bolero" for lunch, ordered some oysters for a start, polished them off and bade the waiter trot up the *consommé*. The waiter shook his head. "Can't be done, Sir. Subaltern gents are only allowed three and six-penceworth of food and you've already had that, Sir. If we was to serve you with a crumb more, we'd be

persecuted under the Trading with the Enemy Act, Sir. There's an A.P.M. sitting in the corner this very moment, Sir, his eyeglass fixed on your every mouthful, very suspicious-like——"

"Good Lord!" said the Babe, and bolted. He bolted as far as the next restaurant, had a three-and-sixpenny *entrée* there, went on to another for sweets, and yet another for coffee and trimmings. These short bursts between courses kept his appetite wonderfully alive.

That afternoon he ran across a lady friend in Bond Street, "a War Toiler enormously interested in the War" (see the current number of *Social Snaps*). She had been at Yvonne's trying on her gauze for the Boccaccio Tableaux in aid of the Armenians and needed some relaxation. So she engaged the Babe for the play, to be followed by supper with herself and her civilian husband. The play (a War drama) gave the Babe a fine hunger, but the Commissionaire (apparently a Major-General) who does odd jobs outside the Blitz took exception to him. "Can't go in, Sir." "Why not?" the Babe inquired; "my friends have gone in." "Yessir, but no hofficers are allowed to obtain nourishment after 10 p.m. under Defence of the Realm Act, footnote (*a*) to para. 14004." He leaned forward and whispered behind his glove, "There's a Hay Pee Hem under the portico watching your movements, Sir." The Babe needed no further warning; he dived into his friend's Limousine and burrowed under the rug.

Some time later the door of the car was opened cautiously and the moon-face of the Major-General in-

serted itself through the crack. "Hall clear for the moment, Sir; the Hay Pee Hem 'as gorn orf dahn the street, chasin' a young hofficer in low shoes. 'Ere, tyke this; I'm a hold soldier meself." He thrust a damp banana in the Babe's hand and closed the door softly.

Next morning the Babe dug up an old suit of 1914 "civies" and put them on. A woman in the Tube called him "Cuthbert" and informed him gratuitously that her husband, twice the Babe's age, had volunteered the moment Conscription was declared and had been fighting bravely in the Army Clothing Department ever since. Further she supposed the Babe's father was in Parliament and that he was a Conscientious Objector. In Hyde Park one urchin addressed him as "Daddy" and asked him what he was doing in the Great War; another gambolled round and round him making noises like a rabbit. In Knightsbridge a Military Policeman wanted to arrest him as a deserter. The Babe hailed a taxi and, cowering on the floor, fled back to his hotel and changed into uniform again.

That night, strolling homewards in the dark, immersed in thought, he inadvertently took a pipe out of his pocket and lit it. An A.P.M. who had been sleuthing him for half a mile leapt upon him, snatched the pipe and two or three teeth out of his mouth and returned him to France by the next boat.

. . . . . .

His groom, beaming welcome, met him at the railhead with the horses.

"Hello, old thing, cheerio and all the rest of it," Huntsman whinnied lovingly.

Miss Muffet rubbed her velvet muzzle against his pocket. "Brought a lump of sugar for a little girl?" she rumbled.

He mounted her and headed across country, Miss Muffet pig-jumping and capering to show what excellent spirits she enjoyed.

Two brigades of infantry were under canvas in Mud Gully, their cook fires winking like red eyes. The guards clicked to attention and slapped their butts as the Babe went by. A subaltern bobbed out of a tent and shouted to him to stop to tea. "We've got cake," he lured, but the Babe went on.

A red-hat cantered across the stubble before him waving a friendly crop, "Pip" Vibart the A.P.M. homing to H.Q. "Evening, boy!" he holloaed; "come up and Bridge to-morrow night," and swept on over the hillside. A flight of aeroplanes, like flies in the amber of sunset, droned overhead *en route* for Hunland. The Babe waved his official cap at them: "Good hunting, old dears."

They had just started feeding up in the regimental lines when he arrived; the excited neighing of five hundred horses was music to his ears. His brother subalterns hailed his return with loud and exuberant noises, made disparaging remarks about the smartness of his clothes, sat on him all over the floor and rumpled him. On sighting the Babe, The O'Murphy went mad and careered round the table wriggling like an Oriental

dancer, uttering shrill yelps of delight; presently he bounced out of the window, to enter some minutes later by the same route, and lay the offering of a freshly slain rat at his best beloved's feet.

At this moment the skipper came in plastered thick with the mud of the line, nodded cheerfully to his junior sub and instantaneously fell upon the buttered toast.

"Have a good time, Son?" he mumbled. "How's merrie England?"

"Oh, England's all right, Sir," said the Babe, tickling The O'Murphy's upturned tummy—"quite all right; but it's jolly to be home again among one's ain folk."

XIV

" HARMONY, GENTS! "

NO one, with the exception of the Boche, has a higher admiration for the scrapping abilities of the Scot than I have, but in matters musical we do not hear ear to ear. It is not that I have no soul; I have. I fairly throb with it. I rise in the mornings trilling trifles of Monckton and croon myself to sleep o' nights with snatches of Novello.

I do not wish to boast, but to hear me pick the " Moonlight Sonata " out of a piano with one hand (the other strapped behind my back) is an unforgettable experience.

I would not yield to Paderewski himself on the comb, bones or Jew's harp, and I could give A. Gabriel a run for his money on the coachhorn. But these bagpipes!

It is not so much the execution of the bagpiper that I object to as his restricted repertoire. He can only play one noise. It is quite useless a Scot explaining to me that this is the " Lament of Sandy Macpherson " and that the " Dirge of Hamish MacNish "; it all sounds the same to me.

The brigade of infantry that is camped in front of my dug-out (" Mon Repos ") is a Scots brigade. Not temporary Scots from the Highlands of Commissioner Street, Jo'burg, and Hastings Street, Vancouver (about

whom I have nothing to say), but real *pukka,* law-abiding, kirk-going, God-fearing, bayonet-pushing Gaels, bred among the crags of the Grampians and reared on thistles and illicit whuskey. And every second man in this brigade is a confirmed bagpiper.

They have massed pipes for breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner; pipes solos before, during, and after drinks. If one of them goes across the road to borrow a box of matches, a piper goes with him raising Cain. Their Officers' Mess is situated just behind "Mon Repos," so we live in the orchestra stalls, so to speak, and hear all there is to be heard.

One evening, while Sandy Macpherson's (or Hamish MacNish's) troubles were being very poignantly aired next door, Albert Edward came to the conclusion that the limit had been reached. "They've been killing the pig steadily for ten days and nights now," said he; "something's got to be done about it."

"I'm with you," said I; "but what are we two against a whole brigade? If they were to catch you pushing an impious pin into one of their sacred joy-bags there'd be another Second Lieutenant missing."

"Desist and let me think," said Albert Edward, and for the next hour he lay on his bed rolling and groaning—the usual signs that his so-called brain is active.

The following morning he rode over to the squadron, returning later with the Mess gramophone and a certain record. There are records and records, but for high velocity, armour-piercing and range this one bangs Banagher. It is a gem out of that "sparkling galaxy

of melody, mirth and talent " (Press Agent speaking), *" I Don't Think,"* which scintillates nightly at the Frivolity Theatre.

" When the Humming-birds are singing " is the title thereof, and Miss Birdie de Maie renders it—renders it as she alone can, in a voice like a file chafing corrugated iron.

We started the birds humming at 4 p.m., and let it rip steadily until 11.15 p.m., only stopping to change needles.

Albert Edward's batman unleashed the hub-bub again at six next morning; my batman relieved him at eight, and so on throughout the day in two-hour shifts. At night the line guards carried on. The following morning, as our batmen threatened to report sick, we crimed a trooper for " dumb insolence " and made him expiate his sin by tending the gramophone. O'Dwyer, of one of the neighbouring ammunition columns, came over in the afternoon to complain that his mules couldn't get a wink of sleep and were muttering among themselves; but we gave him a bottle of whiskey and he went away quietly.

Monk of the other column called an hour later to ask if we wanted to draw shell-fire; but we bought him off with a snaffle bit and a bottle of hair lotion.

The whole neighbourhood grew restive. Somebody under cover of the dark took a pot at the gramophone with a revolver and winged it in the trumpet. Even the placid observation balloon which floats above our camp grew nasty and dropped binoculars and sextants on us.

We built a protective breastwork of sandbags about it and carried on. As for ourselves we didn't mind the racket in the least, having taken the precaution of corking our ears with gunners' wax.

Then one evening we discovered a Highland bomber worming up a drain on his stomach towards our instrument. Cornered, he excused himself on the plea that it was a form of Swedish exercise he always took at twilight for the benefit of his digestion. An ingenious explanation, but it hardly covered the live Mills bomb he was endeavouring to conceal in a fold of his kilt. We drove him away with a barrage of peg-mallets; but secretly we were very elated, for it was clear that the strain was telling on the hardy Scot.

As a precautionary measure we now surrounded the gramophone with a barbed-wire entanglement, and so we carried on.

Next day we saw a score of kiltie officers grouped outside their Mess, heads together, apparently in earnest consultation. Every now and again they would turn and glare darkly in our direction.

"The white chiefs hold heap big palaver over yonder," Albert Edward remarked. "They're tossing up now to decide who shall come over and beard us. The braw bairn with the astrakhan knees has lost; he's cocking his bonnet and asking his pals if he's got his sporran on straight. Behold he approacheth, stepping delicately. I leave it to you, partner."

I lay in the grass and waited for the deputation. The gramophone, safe behind its sandbags and wire, was

doing busines as usual, Miss Birdie yowling away like a wild cat on hot cinders. The deputation picked his way round the horse lines, nodded to me and sat down on the oil-drum we keep for the accommodation of guests. He nervously opened the ball by remarking that the weather was fine.

I did not agree with him, but refused to argue. That baffled him for some seconds, but he recovered by maintaining that it was anyway finer than it had been in 1915. After that outburst he seemed at a loss for a topic of conversation, and sat scratching his ear as if he expected to get inspiration out of it as a conjurer gets rabbits.

" Ye seem verra pairtial to music?" he ventured presently.

" Passionately," said I.

" Ah—hem! Ye seem verra pairtial to that one selection," he continued.

" Passionately devoted to it," said I. " Lovely little thing; I adore its sentiment, tempo, tremolo and timbre, its fortissimo and allegro. Just listen to the part that's coming now—

'When the humming birds are singing
And the old church bells are ringing
We'll canoodle, we'll canoodle 'neath the moon.
Down in Alabama
You'll be my starry-eyed charmer;
On my white-haired kitten's grave we'll sit and spoon, spoon, spoo-oo-oon.'

Nifty bit of allegro work that—eh, what?"

He nodded politely. " Ay—of course, sairtainly;

but—er—er—don't ye find it grows a wee monotonous in time?"

"Never," I retorted stoutly. "Not in the least. No more than you find the Lament or Dirge of Sandy Macpherson or Hamish MacNish monotonous."

He cocked his ears suddenly and stared at me. Then his chubby face split slowly from ear to ear in the widest grin I ever saw, and up went both his hands.

"Kamerad!" said he.

XV

THE MULE AND THE TANK

THE ammunition columns on either flank provide us with plenty of amusement. They seem to live by stealing each other's mules. My line-guards tell me that stealthy figures leading shadowy donkeys are crossing to and fro all night long through my lines. The respective C.O.'s, an Australian and an Irishman, drop in on us from time to time and warn us against each other. I remain strictly neutral, and so far they have respected my neutrality. I have taken steps toward this end by surrounding my horses with barbed wire and spring guns, tying bells on them and doubling the guard.

Monk, the Australian, dropped in on us two or three days ago. "That darn Sinn Feiner is the limit," said he; "lifted my best moke off me last night while I was up at the batteries. He'd pinch Balaam's ass." We murmured condolences, but Monk waved them aside. "Oh, it's quite all right. I wasn't born yesterday, or the day before for that matter. I'll make that merry Fenian weep tears of blood before I've finished. Just you watch."

O'Dwyer, the merry Fenian, called next day.

"Give us a dhrink, brother-officers," said he. "I'm wake wid laughter."

We asked what had happened.

"Ye know that herrin'-gutted bushranger over yonder? He'd stale the milk out of your tea, he would, be the same token. Well, last night he got vicious and took a crack at my lines. I had rayson to suspect he'd be afther tryin' somethin' on, so I laid for him. I planted a certain mule where he *could* stale it an' guarded the rest four deep. Begob, will ye believe me, but he fell into the thrap head first—the poor simple divil."

"But he got your mule," said Albert Edward, perplexed.

"Shure an' he did, you bet he did—he got old Lyddite."

Albert Edward and I were still puzzled.

"Very high explosive—hence name," O'Dwyer explained.

"Dear hearrts," he went on, "he's got my stunt mule, my family assassin! That long-ear has twenty-three casualties to his credit, including a Brigadier. I have to twitch him to harness him, side-line him to groom him, throw him to clip him, and dhrug him to get him shod. Perceive the jest now? Esteemed comrade Monk is afther pinchin' an infallible packet o' sudden death, an' he don't know it—yet."

"What's the next move?" I inquired.

"I'm going to lave him there. Mind you I don't want to lose the old moke altogether, because, to tell the truth, I'm a biteen fond of him now that I know his thricks, but I figure Mr. Monk will be a severely cured

character inside a week, an' return the beastie himself with tears an' apologies on vellum so long."

I met O'Dwyer again two days later on the mud track. He reined up his cob and begged a cigarette.

"Been havin' the fun o' the worrld down at the dressin'-station watchin' Monk's casualties rollin' in," said he. "Terrible spectacle, 'nough to make a sthrong man weep. Mutual friend Monk lookin' 'bout as genial as a wet hen. This is goin' to be a wondherful lesson to him. See you later." He nudged his plump cob and ambled off, whistling merrily.

But it was Monk we saw later. He wormed his long corpse into "Mon Repos" and sat on Albert Edward's bed laughing like a tickled hyena. "Funniest thing on earth," he spluttered. "A mule strayed into my lines t'other night and refused to leave. It was a rotten beast, a holy terror; it could kick a fly off its ears and bite a man in half. I don't mind admitting it played battledore and what's-'is-name with my organisation for a day or two, but out of respect for O'Dwyer, blackguard though he is, I . . ."

"Oh, so it was O'Dwyer's mule?" Albert Edward cut in innocently.

Monk nodded hastily. "Yes, so it turned out. Well, out of respect for O'Dwyer I looked after it as far as it would allow me, naturally expecting he'd come over and claim it—but he didn't. On the fourth day, after it had made a light breakfast off a bombardier's ear and kicked a gap in a farrier, I got absolutely fed up, turned the damn cannibal loose and gave it a cut with a whip for

God-speed. It made off due east, cavorting and snorting until it reached the tank track; there it stopped and picked a bit of grass. Presently along comes a tank, proceeding to the fray, and gives the mule a poke in the rear. The mule lashes out, catching the tank in the chest, and then goes on with his grazing without looking round, leaving the tank for dead, as by all human standards it should have been, of course. But instead of being dead the box of tricks ups and gives the donk another butt and moves on. That roused the mule properly. He closed his eyes and laid into the tank for dear life; you could hear it clanging a mile away.

"After delivering two dozen of the best, the moke turned round to sniff the cold corpse, but the corpse was still warm and smiling. Then the mule went mad and set about the tank in earnest. He jabbed it in the eye, upper-cut it on the point, hooked it behind the ear, banged its slats, planted his left on the mark and his right on the solar plexus, but still the tank sat up and took nourishment.

"Then the donkey let a roar out of him and closed with it; tried the half Nelson, the back heel, the scissors, the roll, and the flying-mare; tried Westmorland and Cumberland style, collar and elbow, Cornish, Græco-Roman, scratch-as-scratch-can and Ju-jitsu. Nothing doing. Then as a last despairing effort he tried to charge it over on its back and rip the hide off it with his teeth.

"But the old tank gave a 'good-by-ee' cough of its exhaust and rumbled off as if nothing had happened,

nothing at all. I have never seen such a look of surprise on any living creature's face as was on that donk's. He sank down on his tail, gave a hissing gasp and rolled over stone dead. Broken heart."

"Is that the end?" Albert Edward inquired.

"It is," said Monk; "and if you go outside and look half-right you'll see the bereaved Mr. O'Dwyer, all got up in sackcloth, cinders and *crêpe* rosettes, mooning over the deceased like a dingo on an ash heap."

XVI

WAR PAINT

AFTER the 53rd Lancers had been in the trenches for seven days—during which period the Boches hated them ceaselessly with whizz-bangs, tear-shells, snipers, coal-boxes, hand and rifle grenades, spring guns, rifle batteries, machine-guns, gas and liquid fire; and something celestial leaked badly so that the front line gave a muddy imitation of the Grand Canal, Venice—the infantry relieved them and they came out looking like nothing on earth.

They were marched into an ex-dye factory, boiled, fourteen in a vat, issued with a change of underclothes and marched on to billets.

The 53rd being a smart regiment, they were given twenty-four hours to lick and polish themselves like unto the stars of the firmament for brightness, or never hear the last of it.

In twenty-four hours they paraded again, according unto orders, and the stars of the firmament also ran.

At noon the same day the party proceeding on Blighty leave was paraded for inspection by the Orderly Officer.

Pending the arrival of the O.O., the Regimental Sergeant-Major gave them a preliminary look over.

They were dressed by the right in file, chests thrown in the air, faces shiny with soap and pink from razor-

ing. Every badge, buckle and button twinkled a challenge back at the sun, every spur shone like a bar of silver, their leatherwork gleamed with the polish bloom of a plum, their puttees and tunics were without spot or blemish, every cap raked slightly over every right ear. They were smart men of a smart regiment, whose boast it was that they lived and died glitteringly.

The R.S.M. ran a grey foxy eye over and through them. At the sixth file from the right he paused, staggered, blanched, and broke into tears.

The Regiment was disgraced, the name gloriously won by dashing generations of light cavalry men was gone for ever. Here was a Fifty-third proposing to go home and swank about England practically naked. Blankety blankety blank. O Lord! The sixth file went pea-green under his tan, instinctively felt for his top left-hand pocket button and did it up.

The R.S.M. went on his way down the line, thrashing his leggings severely with his whip and shaking with emotion. Ten files further down he found a speck of brass polish lurking behind a belt-hook and didn't expect to survive it.

Sixteenth file rubbed it off with a handkerchief, trembling all over.

The O.O. came on the scene, inspected them with a swelling of pride tightening his tunic, found a few faults as a matter of principle, and ordered them away.

The R.S.M. escorted them to the road, dismissed them with his blessing, adjuring them to be good little

boys generally, and pay his respects to a publican near the Elephant and Castle if they passed that way.

At 2 p.m. they entrained at the railhead along with carolling parties from the thousand-and-one units that go to make the B.E.F.

At 3 a.m. they detrained in the dim-lit vault of Victoria. As they tramped out of the gates a little man, wearing square clothes and an accent that twanged like a banjo, bored into the crowd.

He let some squads of mud-caked line infantry go by unmolested, threw but a cursory glance over a batch of rain-sodden gunners, then his bright eye caught the brighter buttons of the Fifty-thirds and he swooped upon them, thrusting pasteboards into every hand. The sixteenth file paused with his chum under a lamp and read his card.

It ran as follows:

OUR HEROES' SUPPLY DEPT.

Look the part and have your war-yarns believed at home. Put yourselves in our hands and then watch the girls gather round.

List of Charges

Mud-spray (patent mud guaranteed to stick for five days)	1s.
Bullet-holes (punched in cap or tunic)	3d. each.
Blood-stains (indelible)	6d. "
Prayer-book (with embedded bullet)	2s. 6d.

We have also a large stock of souvenirs—shell fragments, bullets, German caps, helmets, etc., at moderate charges.
Call and see us right now. Depôt just round the block.

The sixteenth file looked at his chum, fingering his card uneasily. "Well, Bob, what d'you say? My lassie is won'erful 'ard to convince."

"I'm with you," said his friend. "Mother is a fair terror too."

They tramped after the little man.

A quarter of an hour later they might have been seen tramping back down Victoria Street looking like nothing on earth.

XVII

THE PINCH OF WAR

I CAME across him on the rim of the bog. He stood before a whitewashed cabin glaring fiercely over the brown world.

A coal-black dudeen hung empty and bottom up from his puckered mouth, a rumpled frieze cap was perilously balanced atop of a fringe of white hair. His full figure, upholstered in a worn velvet waistcoat, was thrust well forward as if daring Fate to hit it another blow.

At the moment he was acting as a scratching-post to a large white billy-goat, which chafed itself luxuriously to and fro against his straddled legs. At the sound of my horse's hoofs he turned his head. At the sight of my uniform his eyes brightened, he withdrew a smutty hand from a corduroy pocket and made a travesty of a salute towards his cap, which almost lost its balance.

"Hey! Good day to ye, Captain!" (I am a second lieutenant, but in Ireland every lance-corporal has visionary bâtons on his shoulder-straps.)

I replied suitably, agreed that the weather was fine for the second and trusted, if we were good, we might have an hour of it.

"How is it wid the War this mornin', yer honour?"

I replied that, as far as I knew, it was still there, had passed a quiet night and was doing nicely, thanks.

"Was you ever at the Front, Captain?"

I nodded, and at that his eyes gleamed.

"Begob!—then 'tis yerself has the luck. Wait till I tell you a minute. I'm afther wishin' be all the Blessed Saints I was twinty year younger, 'tis meself would be the first afther them German Daygoes—I would so, the dirthy, desthroyin' blagyards! Tell me now, Captain dear, did you ever kill wan of them at all?"

He hung on my answer to such an extent that the white billy tore a tatter from his canvas coat and ate it unrebuked.

I wagged my head. "Don't know—couldn't say."

"Och, shure, no! What would a grand gentleman like yourself be wantin' wid such dirthy work—'tis a common private's job, so it is. But was meself twinty year younger 'twould be a job I would take great delight in the doin' of it. I would take great delight in landin' wan o' them blagyards a puck wid a bay'net that would let the daylight through him. I would have great courage an' delight in a war wid such as they be, that's the blessed truth, the dirthy, desthroyin', murdherin' divils! Arragh! I hate them!"

He shook a grimy fist in the general direction of America, and the billy, undisturbed, reached up and ate another ribbon off his coat.

"Beggin' yer pardon, but will yer honour be goin' back to the War?"

I said I hoped so some day.

"Listen, then—I'm wishin' ye would kill a German,

two Germans, d'ye hear me now? Two Germans I'm afther wishin' ye."

Again he brandished a trembling fist aloft and again the billy, fearing naught, grazed its way up his back.

"Thanks, very good of you," said I. "I'll remember. Good day."

"Good day it is, an' God save yer honour!"

Then with an overwhelming burst of generosity he promoted me two ranks at once and wished again.

"Colonel," he said solemnly, though shaking with passion, "I'm afther wishin' ye three—ten—*fifteen* Germans!"

"Thanks," I said again, and picked up the reins, wondering if tragedy had shadowed the bogside that morning, if some grey-eyed, black-haired boy would come home no more from Flanders to that whitewashed cabin.

As I turned a beshawled girl poked her head round the door lintel and smiled at me.

"Och, faith, don't be noticin' the granda', yer honour; himself was beyond to the town this mornin', an' they've riz the price o' porther on him wan ha'penny. He do be as mad as the Sivinteen Divils!"

XVIII

THE REGIMENTAL MASCOT

WHEN his honour the Colonel took the owld rigiment to France, Herself came home bringin' the rigimental mascot with her. A big white long-haired billy-goat he was, the same.

"I'll not be afther lavin' him at the daypo," says Herself; "'tis no place for a domestic animal at all, the language them little drummer-boys uses, the dear knows," says she.

So me bowld mascot he stops up at the Castle and makes free with the flower-beds and the hall and the drawin'-room and the domestic maids the way he'd be the Lord-Lieutenant o' the land, and not jist a plain human Angory goat. A proud arrygent crature it is, be the powers! Steppin' about as disdainy as a Dublin gerrl in Ballydehob, and if, mebbe, you'd address him for to get off your flower-beds with the colour of anger in your mouth he'd let a roar out of him like a Sligo piper with poteen taken, and fetch you a skelp with his horns that would lay you out for dead.

And sorra the use is it of complainin' to Herself.

"Ah, Delaney, 'tis the marshal sperit widin him," she'd say; "we must be patient with him for the sake of the owld rigiment"; and with that she'd start hand-

feedin' him with warmed-up sponge cake and playin' with his long silky hair.

"Far be it from me," I says to Mikeen, the herd, "to question the workings o' Providence, but were I the Colonel of a rigiment, which I am not, and *had* to have a mascot, it's not a raparee billy I'd be afther havin', but a nanny, or mebbe a cow, that would step along dacently with the rigiment and bring ye luck, and mebbe a dropeen o' milk for the orficers' tea as well. If it's such cratures that bring ye fortune may I die a peaceful death in a poor-house," says I.

"I'm wid ye," says Mikeen, groanin', he bein' spotted like a leopard with bruises by rason of him havin' to comb the mascot's silky hair twice daily, and the quick temper of the baste at the tangles.

The long of a summer the billy stops up at the Castle, archin' his neck at the wurrld and growin' prouder and prouder by dint of the standin' he had with the owld rigiment and the high feedin' he had from Herself. Faith, 'tis a great delight we servints had of him I'm tellin' ye! It was as much as your life's blood was worth to cross his path in the garden, and if the domestic maids would be meetin' him in the house they'd let him eat the dresses off them before they dare say a word.

In the autumn me bowld mascot gets a wee trifle powerful by dint o' the high feedin' and the natural nature of the crature. Herself, wid her iligant lady's nose, is afther noticin' it, and she sends wan o' the gerrls to tell meself and Mikeen to wash the baste.

"There will be murdher done this day," says I to the

lad, "but 'tis the orders. Go get the cart rope and the chain off the bulldog, and we'll do it. Faith, it isn't all the bravery that's at the Front," says I.

"That's the true wurrd," says he, rubbin' the lumps on his shins, the poor boy.

"Oh, Delaney," says the domestic gerrl, drawin' a bottle from her apron pocket. "Herself says will ye plaze be so obligin' as to sprinkle the mascot wid a dropeen of this ody-koloney scent—mebbe it will quench his powerfulness, she says."

I put the bottle in me pocket. We tripped up me brave goat with the rope, got the bull's collar and chain, and dragged him away towards the pond, him buckin' and ragin' between us like a Tyrone Street lady in the arms of the poliss. To hear the roars he let out of him would turn your hearts cowld as lead, but we held on.

The Saints were wid us; in half an hour we had him as wet as an eel, and broke the bottle of ody-koloney over his back.

He was clane mad. "God save us all when he gets that chain off him!" I says. "God save us it is!" says Mikeen, looking around for a tree to shin.

Just at the minut we heard a great screechin' o' dogs, and through the fence comes the harrier pack that the Reserve orficers kept in the camp beyond. ("Harriers" they called them, but, begob! there wasn't anythin' they wouldn't hunt from a fox to a turkey, those ones.)

"What are they afther chasin'?" says Mikeen.

"'Tis a stag to-day, be the newspapers," I says, "but the dear knows they'll not cotch him this month, be must be gone by this half-hour, and the breath is from them, their tongues is hangin' out a yard," I says.

'Twas at that moment the Blessed Saints gave me wisdom.

"Mikeen," I says, "drag the mascot out before them; we'll see sport this day."

"Herself——" he begins.

"Hoult your whisht," says I, "and come on." With that we dragged me bowld goat out before the dogs and let go the chain.

The dogs sniffed up the strong blast of ody-koloney and let a yowl out of them like all the banshees in the nation of Ireland, and the billy legged it for his life—small blame to him!

Meself and Mikeen climbed a double to see the sport.

"They have him," says Mikeen. "They have not," says I; "the crature howlds them by two lengths."

"He has doubled on them," says Mikeen; "he is as sly as a Jew."

"He is forninst the rabbit holes now," I says. "I thank the howly Saints he cannot burrow."

"He has tripped up—they have him bayed," says Mikeen.

And that was the mortal truth, the dogs had him.

Oh, but it was a bowld billy! He went in among those hounds like a lad to a fair, you could hear his horns lambastin' their ribs a mile away. But they were too many for him and bit the grand silky hair off

him by the mouthful. The way it flew you'd think it was a snowstorm.

"They have him desthroyed," says Mikeen.

"They have," says I, "God be praised!"

At the moment the huntsman leps his harse up on the double beside us; he was phlastered with muck from his hair to his boots.

"What have they out there?" says he, blinkin' through the mud and not knowin' rightly what his hounds were coursin' out before him, whether it would be a stag or a Bengal tiger.

"'Tis her ladyship's Rile Imperial Mascot Goat," says I; "an' God save your honour, for she'll have your blood in a bottle for this day's worrk."

The huntsman lets a curse out of his stummick and rides afther them, flat on his saddle, both spurs tearin'. In the wink of an eye he is down among the dogs, larrupin' them with his whip and drawin' down curses on them that would wither ye to hear him—he had great eddication, that orficer.

"Come now," says I to Mikeen, the poor lad, "let you and me bear the cowld corpse of the diseased back to Herself, mebbe she'll have a shillin' handy in her hand, the way she'd reward us for saving the body from the dogs," says I.

But was me bowld mascot dead? He was not. He was alive and well, the thickness of his wool had saved him. For all that he had not a hair of it left to him, and when he stood up before you, you wouldn't know him; he was that ordinary without his fleece, he was

no more than a common poor man's goat, he was no more to look at than a skinned rabbit, and that's the truth.

He walked home with meself and Mikeen as meek as a young gerrl.

Herself came runnin' out, all fluttery, to look at him.

"Ah, but that's not *my* mascot," she says.

"It is, Marm," says I; and I swore to it by the whole Calendar—Mikeen too.

"Bah! how disgustin'. Take it to the cowhouse," says she, and stepped indoors without another word.

We led the billy away, him hangin' his head for shame at his nakedness.

"Ye'll do no more mascotin' avic," says I to him. "Sorra luck you would bring to a blind beggar-man the way you are now—you'll never step along again with the drums and tambourines."

And that was the true word, for though Herself had Mikeen rubbing him daily with bear's grease and hair lotion he never grew the same grand fleece again, and he'd stand about in the backfield, brooding for hours together, the divilment clane gone out of his system; and if, mebbe, you'd draw the stroke of an ash-plant across his ribs to hearten him, he'd only just look at you sad-like and pass no remarks.

XIX

WAR VEGETATION

'TIS her ladyship up at the Castle that has the War at heart; 'tis no laughin' matter wid her.

She came back from England wid the grandest modern notions for conductin' the war in the home that ever ye'd see, an' a foreign domestic maid she had hired in London.

"'Tis a poor Belgium refuge she is, Delaney," says Herself to meself. "In the home she is afther lavin' there is nothing left standin' but the winc-cellar, an' that full o' German Huns—she is wet wid weepin' yet," says Herself; "so be kind to her, for we must help our brave Allies."

So the Belgium refuge walks into the Castle an' becomes lady's maid. A fine, upstandin' colleen it is, too, by the same token, wid notions in dhress that turned all the counthry gurrls contemptjous wid envy, an' a hat on the head of her that was like a conservatory for the flowers that was in it. But did Herself's war work stop at adoptin' our brave Alice? It did not. She gave the young ladies of the high nobility a powerful organisin', an' they'd be in at Ballydrogeen every day o' the week sellin' Frinch, Eyetalian, Rooshan, an' Japan flags an' makin' a mint o' money at it. The lads that would be comin' into Ballydrogeen Fair to do a bit of hand

slappin' over a pig, an' mebbe taste a tageen wid the luckpenny, would dishcover themselves goin' home in the ass cart, pig an' all, sober as stones an' plasthered thick wid flags the way you'd think they'd be the winnin' boat at Galway Regatta. For 'tis a bould bouchal will stand up to the young ladies of the high nobility whin they have their best dhresses on an' do be prancin' up to ye, the smiles an' blarney dhrippin' from them like golden syrup, wid their "Oh, Mickey, how is your dear darlint baby? Have ye not the least little shillin' for me, thin?" or their "Good day to ye, Terry Ryan; I'm all in love wid that bay colt ye have, an' I will plague my Da into his grave until he buys him for me. Will ye not have a small triflin' flag from me, Terry Ryan?"

But did Herself's war work stop at flag selling? It did not. Wan mornin' she comes steppin' down the garden as elegant as a champion hackney, holdin' her skirts high out of the wet.

"Is that you, Delaney?" says she.

"It is, your ladyship," says I, crawlin' out from behindt the swate pays.

"Listen to me," says she. "Thim flowers is nothin' but a luxury these days. I'll have nothin' but war vigitables in my garden."

Says I, "Beggin' your pardon, but phwat may they be?" She was puzzled for a moment, an' stands there scratchin' her ear as ye might say.

"Oh, jist ordinary vigitables, only grown under war conditions," says she at length. "At anny rate I'll have

no flowers, so desthroy thim entirely, an' grow vigitables in their place—d'you understand?" says she.

"I do, your ladyship," says I.

I wint within to tell Anne Toher, the cook. "Herself is for desthroyin' the flowers entirely, an' plantin' war vigitables," says I.

"An' phwat may they be?" says the woman.

"The same as ordinary vigitables, only growed under war conditions," says I. "Ivvry spud doin' its duty, ivvry parsnip strugglin' to be two. We will have carrots an' onions in ivvry bed up to the front door, Frinch beans trained all over the porch. Ye'll jist lane out of the kitchen winda an' gather in the dinner yourself; 'twill be a great savin' o' labour," says I.

"An' phwat'll ye do for the table decorations whin the gintry comes callin'?" says Anne Toher.

"Faith," says I, "'tis aisy done; I will jist set a bookay o' hothouse cabbages in the vases, an' if, mebbe, the Colonel would be comin' home on lave an' should ax a nosegay to stick in his coat, begob I'll have a fine sprig of parsley for him," says I.

"Ye poor man," says she, "'twill sour the heart within ye." Ah! That was the true word, 'twas like pullin' me heart's blood out be the roots to desthroy thim flowers; but it had to be done. War is war.

By June the garden was nothin' but a say of vigitables, an' divil a touch of colour to take your eye was there in it, no matter how long you'd look.

Wan day I am up at the yard, seein' if, mebbe, Anne Toher would have the taste o' tay in the pot, meself

havin' a thirst on me that would face the Shannon by dint of the hoein' I was afther doin' in the spud plantations, whin the woman puts her head out of the kitchen winda. "Whist, Delaney," says she, "there's gintry to lunch," says she.

"Phwat gintry?" says I.

"Sir Patrick Freebody, o' Michaelstown," says she, an' at that me blood run cowld.

Sir Patrick Freebody had the grandest garden over at Michaelstown that ivver you'd see in the nation of Ireland, an' a cousin to me, John O'Callaghan, was gardener to him. There was no love betwane us either, by the same token. I would as soon wake John O'Callaghan as I would the Divil, an' that's the morthal truth, for all that he was a cousin to me.

I knew how 'twould be as sure as I was alive in this worrld. Owld Sir Pat would be into lunch before a bare board, an' whin he wint home to Michaelstown he would be tellin' John O'Callaghan, an' I would be skinned raw wid the jeerin' an' blaggardin' the same John O'Callaghan would have wid me.

"Whisper, whin will they be atein'?" says I to Anne Toher.

"In ten minutes, please God, an' the spuds are soft," says she.

"Begob," says I to meself, "I'll set flowers on that table or cut my throat across," an' I ran away, not knowin' where I'd be findin' thim, not within five miles. But I was not half-way round the laurel bushes whin the Blessed Saints sent me light.

In sivin minuites I had flowers in the middle bowl, an' backed away behindt the hat-racks as Herself an' owld Sir Pat comes out of the drawin'-room an' goes in to lunch. I set me eye to the kayhole and watched, me heart like water betwane me teeth.

Owld Sir Pat, he mumbles an' coughs an' talks about the weather, an' the war, an' the recruitin'.

Herself she talks about the soldiers' shest-protectors an' her war work, an' how she was scared the Colonel was sittin' about at the Front wid wet fate.

Presently the owld man notices the flowers in the bowl an' lanes over the table blinkin' at thim through his spectacles in his half-blind way.

"Lovely flowers ye have there, Lady Nugent, positive blaze o' colour. How do you do it? Now, that scamp of a gardener of mine——" He sits back again, tellin' Herself how John O'Callaghan had left his chrysanthemums go to ruination wid blight. Her Ladyship takes wan look at the flowers, her eyebrows go up, she turns as red as a bateroot and bites her lip, but says nothin'. God bless her! I backed away, breathin' aisy once more, but at that minuite down the stairs comes our brave Alice, the Belgium refuge, all of a lather, gabbing like a turkey in the foreign tongue, and runs straight for the dinin'-room door.

'Tis a mercy I have the quick wit; I pulled down the Colonel's dhress-sword from where it hung on the wall and headed her off, wavin' it at her the way I'd draw the stroke of it across her windpipe. She wint leppin' back up the stairs like a mountainy hare among the

rocks, thinkin', mebbe, the German Huns was come at her again out of the wine-cellar.

An hour later I heard owld Sir Pat's car lavin' the front door, so I sheathed me sword an' let her out of her bedroom where she had herself locked in.

A strong shindy the gurrl raised, an' Herself forced me to buy her a new hat out of me wages, seein' that her owld wan was desthroyed by dint of the soakin' an' crushin' it had in the flower bowl; but sorra the bit did I care, for I passed John O'Callaghan beyond in Michaelstown on Sunday, an' divil a word said he, but scowled at me in a way that did my heart good to see.

XX

A CHANGE OF FRONT

WE fell asleep with goose feathers of snow whirling against the carriage windows, and woke to see a shot-silk sea flinging white lace along a fairy coast on one side and pink and yellow villas nesting among groves of palm and orange on the other.

"Of course this sort of thing doesn't happen in real life," said Albert Edward, flattening his proboscis against the pane. "Either it's all a dream or else those oranges will suddenly light up; George Grossmith, in a topper and spats, will trip in from the O.P. side; girls will blossom from every palm, and all ranks get busy with song and prance—tra-la-la!"

The Babe kicked his blankets off and sat up. "Nothing of the sort. We've arrived in well-known Italy, that's all. Capital—Rome. Exports—old masters, chianti and barrel-organs. Faces South and is centrally heated by Vesuvius."

We rattled into a cutting, the sides of which were decorated with posters: "Good Healt at the England," "Good Luck at Tommy," and drew up in a flag-festooned station, on the platform of which was a deputation of smiling *signorinas* who presented the Atkinses with postcards, fruit and cigarettes, and ourselves with flowers.

"Very *bon*—eh, what?" said the Babe as the train resumed its rumblings. "All the same I wish we could thank them prettily and tell them how pleased we are we've come. Does anybody handle the patter?"

Albert Edward thought he did. "Used to swot up a lot of Italian literature when I was a lad; technical military stuff about the divisions of Gaul by one J. Cæsar."

"Too technical for everyday use," I objected. "A person called D'Annunzio is their best seller now, I believe."

"Somebody'd better hop off the bus at the next stop and buy a book of the words," said the Babe.

At the next halt I dodged the deputation and purchased a phrase-book with a Union Jack on the cover, entitled *The English Soldier in Italy,* published in Milan.

Among military terms, grouped under the heading of "The Worldly War," a *garetta* (sentry-box) is defined as "a watchbox," and the machine-gunner will be surprised to find himself described as "a grapeshot-man." It has also short conversations for current use.

"Have you of any English papers?"

"Yes, sir, there's *The Times* and *Tit-Bits.*"

(Is it possible that the land of Virgil, of Horace and Dante knows not *The Daily Mail?*)

"Give me, please, many biscuits."

"No, sir, we have no biscuits; the fabrication of them has been avoided by Government."

"Waiter, show me a good bed where one may sleep undisturbated."

In the train:—

"Dickens! I have lost my ticket."

"Alas, you shall pay the price of another."

A jocular vein is recommended with cabbies:—

"Coachman, are you free?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then long live liberty."

Very young subalterns with romantic notions may waste good beer-money on foreign phrase-books and get themselves enravelled in hopeless international tangles, but not old Atkins. The English soldier in Italy will speak what he has always spoken with complete success in Poperinghe, Amiens, Cairo, Salonika, Dar-es-Salaam, Bagdad and Jerusalem, to wit, English.

But to return to our train. At nightfall we left the fairy coast behind, its smiling *signorinas,* flags, flowers and fruit, and swarmed up a pile of perpendicular scenery from summer to winter. During a halt in the midst of moonlit snows our carriage door was opened and we beheld outside an Italian officer, who saluted and gave us an exhibition of his native tongue at rapid fire.

"He's referring to us," said the Babe. "Answer him, somebody; tell him we're on his side and all that."

"*Viva l' Italia,*" William exclaimed promptly.

The Italian countered with a "*Viva l'Inghilterra*" and swept on with his monologue.

"Seems to want something," said Albert Edward. "Wonder if Cæsar is too technical for him."

"Read him something from *The English Soldier in Italy,*" I suggested.

The Babe thumbed feverishly through the handbook. "'Let us get in; the guard has already cried'—No, that won't do. 'Give me a walk and return ticket, please'—That won't do either. 'Yes, I have a trunk and a carpet-bag'—Oh, this is absurd." He cast the book from him.

At that moment the engine hooted, the trucks gave a preliminary buck and started to jolt forward. The Italian sprang upon the running board and, clinging to the hand-rail, continued to declaim emotionally through the window. William became alarmed. "This chap has something on his mind. Perhaps he's trying to tell us that a bridge has blown up, or that the train is moving without a movement order, or the chauffeur is drunk. For Heaven's sake somebody do something —quick!"

Thereupon Babel broke loose, each of us in his panic blazing off in the foreign language which came easiest to his tongue.

William called for a bath in Arabic. The Babe demanded champagne in French. Albert Edward declined *mensa,* while I, by the luckiest chance, struck a language which the Italian recognised with a glad yelp. In a moment explanations were over and I had swung him into the carriage and slammed the door.

The new-comer was a lieutenant of mountain artillery. He was returning from leave, had confided himself to the care of a Railway Transport Officer, had in

consequence missed every regular train and wanted a lift to the next junction. That was all. I then set about to make him as comfortable as possible, wrapping him in one of the Babe's blankets and giving him his maiden drink of whisky out of William's First Field Dressing. With tears streaming down his cheeks he vented his admiration of the British national beverage.

In return he introduced me to the Italian national smoke, an endless cigar to be sucked up through a straw. Between violent spasms I implored the name and address of the maker. We were both very perfect gentlemen.

We then prattled about the War; he boasting about the terrific depths of snow in which he did his battling, while I boasted about the Flanders mud. We broke about even on that bout. He gained a bit on mountain batteries, but I got it all back, and more, on tanks. He had never seen one, so I had it all my own way. Our tanks, after I had finished with them, could do pretty nearly anything except knit.

Defeated in the field, he turned home to Rome for something to boast about. I should see St. Peter's, he said. It was magnificent, and the Roman art treasures unsurpassable.

I replied that our cathedral at Westminster was far newer, and that the art in our National Cold Storage had cost an average of £5473 19s. 1¼d. per square foot. Could he beat it?

That knocked him out of his stride for a moment,

but he struggled back with some remark about seeing his Coliseum by moonlight.

I replied that at ours we had modern electric light, Murphy and Mack, Vesta Tilley and the Bioscope.

Whether he would have recovered from that I know not, for at this moment the lights of the junction twinkled in at the frosted windows and he took his departure, first promising to call in at our Mess and suffer some more whisky if in return I would crawl up his mountain and meet the chamois and edelweiss.

Later on, as I was making up my bed for the night, Albert Edward poked his head out of the cocoon of horse-blankets in which he had wound himself.

"By the way, what ungodly jargon were you and that Italian champing together so sociably?"

"German," I whispered; "but for the Lord's sake don't tell anybody."

XXI

ANTONIO GIUSEPPE

OUR squadron is at the present moment billeted in what the house-agents would describe as a "unique old-world property," a ramshackle pile which looks like a palace from the south and a workhouse from the north.

It commenced its career, back in the long ago, as a glorified week-end bungalow for Doges. In course of time it became a monastery.

When the pious monks took over they got busy with whitewash and obliterated most of the Doges' sportive mural decorations. Most, but not all.

Methinks the Abbot had tripped the boulevards in his youth and he spared some of the brighter spots of the more sportive frescoes in memory of old times and to keep his heart up during Lent. Anyhow they are still there.

To-day our long-faced chums champ their feeds in cloisters where once the good monks told their beads, and our bold sergeant boys quaff their tonics beneath a painted ceiling whereon Rackham satyrs are depicted chivvying Kirchner nymphs across a Leader landscape.

A small portion of one immense wing is inhabited by a refugee lady, who had retired in good order, haling the whole menagerie along with her, calves, fowls, children, donkey, piebald pig and all.

When first we came into residence here we heard strange nocturnal swishings and shufflings overhead, where none should be, and attributed them to the ghost of the Abbot, who had returned from Purgatory with a bucket of lime and was striving to wash out his former lapses. Later on we discovered it was the calves, who from inscrutable motives of their own prefer living in the attics. How Mrs. Refugee hoisted them up there in the first place and how she proposes to get them down again when they ripen are questions she alone can answer, but will never do so because we haven't enough Italian to ask her.

The piebald pig is supported entirely by voluntary contributions, and, like many other such institutions, keeps frequent fasts. When he retreated here there was no sty to accommodate him; but Mrs. Refugee, with the practical originality that distinguishes her, routed out a retired dog-kennel from somewhere and anchored him to it. This has had the effect of creating in him a dual personality.

Sometimes he thinks he is just fat old Dolce F. Niente the pig, and behaves as such, and one can tread all over him without disturbing his melodious slumbers. At others the collar and chain prey on his mind and he imagines he is Patriæ Defensor the trusty watch-dog, and mows down all comers.

The children and fowls are doing nicely. They speedily discover what innumerable fowls and children all the world over had discovered before them, namely, that the turtling dove is a wild beast compared with the

British warrior and his war-horse, and they victimise the defenceless creatures accordingly.

The result is that the Atkinses get only what husks of their rations the children have neglected, and the fowls only allow the hairies what oats they cannot possibly stagger away with.

Antonio Giuseppe the donkey was also a war profiteer. Commerce might stagnate, armies clash and struggle, nations bleed to death, he did not care. "*Viva la guerra!*" said Antonio Giuseppe. "As long as there is a British unit handy to dine out with I'm all for it." These sentiments, though deplorable, were not without reason, for until we came I very much doubt if he had ever had a full meal—a real rib-straining blow-out—in his life.

He was a miserable little creature, standing about a yard high by six inches broad. By tucking in his tail he could have passed for a rabbit at any fancy-dress ball. His costume was a patch-work affair of hairy tufts and bare spaces. I think he must have been laid away in a drawer without camphor at one time and been mauled by a moth.

A disreputable ragamuffin person was Antonio Giuseppe the donkey, but for all that he had a way with him, and was in his day the Light-weight Champion Diner-out of all Italy—probably of the world.

At night he reposed in the kitchen along with Mrs. Refugee, the *bambini* and fowls. The day he spent in his observation post, lurking behind a screen of mulberries and vines, keeping a watchful eye on the horses.

As soon as their nosebags were on he commenced to move stealthily towards the lines, timing himself to arrive just as the nosebags came off and the hay-nets went up. He then glided softly between the horses and helped himself. Being tiny and very discreet he frequently passed unobserved, but should the line-guard spot him he had his plan of action.

Oft-times have I seen a perspiring and blasphemous trooper pursuing the winged Antonio Giuseppe round the lines with a stable broom; but when the broom descended Antonio Giuseppe was not there to receive it. He would nip under the breast-rope, slip in under one horse's belly and out between the legs of another, dodging through and round the astounded animals like a half-back through a loose scrum or a greased pig at a fair, snatching a generous contribution from each hay-net as he passed. Under this method Antonio throve and throve; but the tale of splintered brooms grew and grew and the Quartermaster loved me not.

Yesterday the General intimated that he'd like to inspect us. Always eager to oblige, we licked, polished, brushed and burnished ourselves, pipeclayed our head-ropes, pomaded our moustaches, powdered our noses and paraded.

We paraded to-day in regimental column in a field west of our palace-workhouse and sat stiff in our saddles, the cheerful sunshine glowing on leather-work, glinting on brass and steel, conscious that we could give any Beauty Chorus a run for its money.

There sounded a shrill fanfaronade of trumpets, toot-

ling the salute, and a dazzle of gold and scarlet like a Turner sunset, blazed into view—the General and his Staff.

At the same moment Antonio Giuseppe espied us from his observation post and, getting it into his head that we were picnicing out (it was about lunch-time), hastened to join us. As the General reached the leading squadron Antonio Giuseppe reached the near squadron and, sliding unobtrusively into its ranks, looked about for the hay-nets.

However the Second in Command noticed his arrival and motioned to his trumpeter. The trumpeter spurned forward and pinked Antonio Giuseppe in the hindquarters with his sword-point as a hint to him to move on. Antonio, thinking the line-guards were upon him and with a new type of broom, loosed a squeal of agony and straightway commenced his puss-in-the-corner antics in and out and round about the horses' legs. They didn't like it at all; it tickled and upset them; they changed from the horizontal to the vertical, giggled and pawed the air.

Things were becoming serious. A hee-hawing tatterdemalion donkey, playing "ring o' roses" with a squadron of war-horses, tickling them into hysterics, detracts from the majesty of such occasions and is no fit spectacle for a General. A second trumpeter joined in the chase and scored a direct prick on the soft of Antonio Giuseppe's nose as he dived out under the tail of a plunging gun-mare. Antonio whipped about and fled towards the centre squadron, ears wobbling, braying an-

guished S.O.S.'s. The two trumpeters, young and ardent lads, thundered after him, swords at the engage, racing each other, knee to knee for first blood. They scored simultaneously on the butt of his tail, and Antonio, stung to the quick, shot clean through (or rather under) the centre squadron into the legs of the General's horse, tripping up that majestic animal and bringing the whole stately edifice down into a particularly muddy patch of Italy.

Tremendous and awful moment! As my groom and countryman expressed it, "Ye cud hear the silence for miles." The General did not break it. I think his mouth was too full of mud and loose teeth for words. He arose slowly out of the ooze like an old walrus lifting through a bed of seaweed black as death, slime dripping from his whiskers, and limped grimly from the field, followed by his pallid staff proffering handkerchiefs and smelling-salts. But I understand he became distinctly articulate when he got home, and the upshot of it is that we are to be put in the forefront of the nastiest battle that can be arranged for us.

And Antonio Giuseppe the donkey, author of all the trouble, what of him? you ask.

Antonio Giuseppe the donkey will never smile again, dear reader. With his edges trimmed and "Welcome" branded across his back he may serve as a mangy doormat for some suburban maisonette, but at the present moment he lies in the mud of the parade-ground, as flat as a sole on a sand-bank, waiting for someone to roll him up and carry him away.

When a full-fed Major-General falls he falls heavily.

XXII

"I SPY"

I PUT my head into the Mess and discovered Albert Edward alone there cheating himself at Patience.

"My leave warrant has come and I'm off!" said I. "If Foch should ring up tell him he'll have to struggle along by himself for a fortnight. Cheeroh!"

"Cheeroh!" said Albert Edward. "Give my regards to Nero, Borgia and all the boys."

I shut the door upon him and took the road to Rome.

Arrived there I attempted to shed a card on the Pope, but was repulsed by a halbardier in fancy dress; visited the catacombs (by the way, in the art of catacombing we latter-day sinners have nothing to learn from the early saints. Why, at Arras in 1917 we——Oh, well, never mind now!); kept a solemn face while bands solemnly intoned Tipperary (under the impression it was the British National Anthem); bought a bushel of mosaic brooches and several million picture postcards and acted the perfect little tripper throughout.

Then one day while stepping into a hotel lift I bumped full into Wilfrid Wilcox Wilbur, stepping forth.

You have all of you read the works of Wilfrid Wilcox Wilbur (*Passion Flowers*, *Purple Patches*, etc. Boost and Boom. 6s.); if you haven't you should, for Wilfrid

is the lad to handle the soul-sob and the heart-throb and warm up cold print generally.

In pre-war days he was to be met with in London drawing-rooms about tea-time wearing his mane rather longer than is done in the best menageries, giving a very realistic imitation of a lap-dog. And now behold him in military disguise parading the Eternal City!

"What are you doing here?" I gasped.

He put a finger to his lips. "Psst!" Then pushing me into the lift, he ejected the attendant, turned a handle and we shot aloft. Half-way between heaven and earth he stopped the conveyance and having made quite sure we were not being overheard by either men or angels, leaned up against my ear and whispered, "Secret Service!"

I was amazed. "Not really!"

Wilbur nodded. "Yes, really! That's why I have to be so careful; they have their agents everywhere listening, watching, taking notes."

I felt for my pocket-case momentarily fearful that *They* (whoever *They* were) might have taken mine.

"And do you have agents also, listening, noting, taking watches?" I asked.

Wilbur said he had and went on to explain that so perfect was his system that a cat could hardly kitten anywhere between the Yildiz Kiosk and Wilhelmstrasse without his full knowledge and approval. I was very thrilled, for I had previously imagined all the cloak and dagger spy business to be an invention of the magazine writer, yet here was little Wilbur, according to

himself, living a life of continuous yellow drama, more Queuxrious than fiction, rich beyond dreams of Garavice. (Publisher—"Tut-tut!" Author—"Peccavi!")

I thrilled and thrilled. "Look here," I implored, "if you are going to pull off a *coup* at any time, do let me come too!"

Wilbur demurred, the profession wasn't keen on amateurs, he explained; they were too impetuous, lacked subtlety—still if the opportunity occurred he might —perhaps—— I wrung his hand, then, seeing that bells on every landing had been in a state of uproar for some fifteen minutes and that the attendant was commencing to swarm the cable after his lift, we dropped back to earth again, returned it to him and went out to lunch.

"And now tell me something of your methods," said I, as we sat down to meat.

Wilbur promptly grabbed me by the collar and dragged me after him under the table.

"What's the matter now?" I gulped.

"Fool!" he hissed. "The waiter is a Bulgarian spy."

"Let's arrest him then," said I.

Wilbur groaned. "Oh, you amateurs, you would stampede everything and ruin all!"

I apologised meekly and we issued from cover again and resumed our meal, silently because (according to Wilbur) the peroxide blonde doing snake-charming tricks with spaghetti at the next table was a Hungarian

agent, and there was a Turk concealed in the potted palms near by.

I thrilled and thrilled and thrilled.

Then followed stirring days. Rome at that time, I gathered, was the centre of the spy industry and at the height of the sleuthing season, for they hemmed us in on every hand—according to Wilbur. I was continually being dragged aside into the shadow of dark arcades to dodge Austrian Admirals disguised as dustmen, rushed up black alleys to escape the machinations of Bolshevick adventuresses parading as parish priests, and submerged in fountains to avoid the evil eyes of German diplomats camouflaged as flower girls—according to Wilbur.

I thrilled and thrilled and thrilled and thrilled, bought myself a stiletto and a false nose.

However, after about a week of playing trusty Watson to Wilbur's Sherlock without having effected a single arrest, drugged one courier, stilettoed a soul, or being allowed to wear my false nose once, my thrillings became less violent, and giving Wilbur the slip one afternoon, I went on the prowl alone. About four of the clock my investigations took me to Latour's. At a small marble table lapping up ices as a kitten laps cream, I beheld Temporary Second Lieut. Mervyn Esmond.

You all of you remember Mervyn Esmond, he of the spats, the eyeglass and grey top-hat, the Super-Knut of the Frivolity Theatre who used to gambol so gracefully before the many "twinkling toes" of the Super-Beauty Chorus, singing "Billy of Piccadilly." You *must* remember Mervyn Esmond!

But that was the Esmond of yore, for a long time past he has been doing sterling work in command of an Army Pierrot troupe.

I sat down beside him, stole his ice and finished it for him.

"And now what are you doing here?" I asked.

"I've come down from the line to get some new dresses for Queenie," he replied. "She—he, that is—is absolutely in rags, bursts a pair of corsets and a pair of silk stockings every performance, very expensive item."

I had better explain here and now that Queenie is the leading lady in Mervyn's troupe. She—he, that is—started her—his—military career as an artillery driver, but was discovered to be the possessor of a very shrill falsetto voice and dedicated to female impersonations forthwith.

"She—he—is round at the dressmaker's now," Mervyn went on, "wrestling with half a dozen *hysterical* mannequins. I'm getting her—him, I should say—up regardless. Listen. Dainty ninon georgette outlined with chenile stitching. Charmeuse overtunic, embroidered with musquash and skunk pom-poms. Crêpe de Chine undies interwoven with blue baby ribbon, camis——"

"Stop!" I thundered. "Do you want me to blush myself to death? I am but a rough soldier."

Mervyn apologised, wrapped himself round another ice and asked me how I was amusing myself in Tibertown.

Having first ascertained that there were no enemy agents secreted under the table or among the potted palms, I unburdened my soul to him concerning Wilbur and the *coups* that never came off.

He stared at me for a few moments, his eyes twinkling, then he leaned over the table.

"My active brain has evolved a be-autiful plan," said he. "It's yours for another ice."

I bought it.

. . . . . .

I found Wilbur sleuthing the crowd from behind a tall tumbler in the Excelsior lounge, and dragging him into the lift, hung it up half-way between here and hereafter, and whispered my great news.

"Where, when?" he cried, blench-blanching.

"In my hotel at midnight," I replied. "I hid in a clothes-basket and heard all. We will frustrate their knavish tricks, thou and I."

Wilbur did not appear to be as keen as I had expected, he hummed and hawed and chatted about my amateurishness and impetuosity; but I was obdurate, and taking him firmly by the arm led him off to dinner.

I hardly let go of his arm at all for the next five hours, judging it safer so.

Five minutes before midnight I led him up the stairs of my hotel and tip-toeing into a certain room, clicked on the light.

"See that door over there?" I whispered, pointing, "'tis the bathroom. Hide there. I shall be concealed in the wardrobe. In five minutes the conspirators will

appear. The moment you hear me shout, 'Hands up, Otto von Schweinhund, *le jeu est fait,*' or words to that effect—burst out of the bathroom and collar the lady."

I pushed Wilbur into the bathroom (he was trembling slightly, excitement no doubt) and closed the door.

I had no sooner shut myself into the wardrobe when a man and a woman entered the room. They were both in full evening dress, the man was a handsome rascal, the woman a tall, languid beauty, gorgeously dressed. She flung herself down in a chair and lit a cigarette. The man carefully locked the door and crossed the room towards her.

"Hansa," he hissed, "did you get the plans of the fortress?"

She laughed and taking a packet of papers from the bosom of her dress, flung it on the table.

"'Twas easy, *mon cher.*"

He caught it and held it aloft.

"Victory!" he cried. "The Vaterland is saved!"

He passed round the table and stood before her, his eyes glittering.

"You beautiful devil," he muttered, through clenched teeth. "I knew you could do it. I knew you would bewitch the young attaché. All men are puppets in your hands, beautiful, beautiful fiend!"

The moment had come. Hastily donning my false nose, I flung open the wardrobe, shouted the signal and covered the pair with my stiletto. The woman screamed and flung herself into the arms of her accomplice.

"Ah, ha, foiled again! Curse you!" He snarled and covered me with the plans of the fortress.

I grappled with him, he grappled with me, the beautiful devil grappled with both of us; we all grappled.

There was no movement from the bathroom door.

We grappled some more, we grappled all over the table, over the washstand and a brace of chairs. The villain lost his whiskers, the villainess lost her lovely golden wig, the hero (me) lost his false nose. I shouted the signal once more, the villain shouted it, the villainess shouted it, we all shouted it.

There was no movement from the bathroom door.

We grappled some more, we grappled over the chest of drawers, under the carpet and in and out of the towel-horse.

A muffled report rang out from somewhere about the beautiful devil.

"For God's sake, go easy!" she wheezed in my left ear. "My corsets have went!"

Then, as there was still no movement from the bathroom door, and we none of us had a grapple left in us, we called "time."

Mervyn sat up on the edge of the bed sourly regarding the bedraggled Queenie.

"In rags once more, twenty pounds' worth of georgette, charmeuse and ninon whatisname torn to shreds!" he groaned. "Oh, you tom-boy, you!"

"Come and dig these damn whalebones out of my ribs," said she.

I staggered across the room and opening the bath-room door, peered within.

"Any sign of our friend Sherlock, the spy-hound?" Mervyn enquired.

"Yes," said I. "He's tumbled in a dead faint into the bath!"

XXIII

A FAUX PAS

WHEN we have finished slaying for the day, have stropped our gory sabres, hung our horses up to dry and are sitting about after mess, girths slackened and pipes aglow, it is a favourite pastime of ours to discuss what we are going to do after the War.

William, our mess president and transport officer, says frankly, "Nothing." Three years' continuous struggle to keep the mess going in whiskey and soda and the officers' kit down to two hundred and fifty pounds per officer has made an old man of him, once so full of bright quips and conundrums. The moment Hindenburg chucks up the sponge off goes William to Chelsea Hospital, there to spend the autumn of his days pitching the yarn and displaying his honourable scars gained in many a bloody battle in the mule lines.

So much for William. The Skipper, who is as sensitive to climate as a lily of the hot-house, prattles lovingly during the summer months of selling ice-creams to the Eskimos, and during the winter months of peddling roast chestnuts in Timbuctoo. MacTavish and the Babe propose, under the euphonious *noms de commerce* of Vavaseur and Montmorency, to open pawn-shops among ex-munition-workers, and thereby accumulate old masters, grand pianos and diamond tiaras to export to

the United States. For myself I have another plan.

There is a certain historic wood up north through which bullets whine, shells rumble and no bird sings. After the War I am going to float a company, purchase that wood and turn it into a pleasure-resort for the accommodation of tourists.

There will be an entrance fee of ten francs, and everything else will be extra.

Tea in the dug-out—ten francs. Trips through trenches, accompanied by trained guides reciting selected passages from the outpourings of our special correspondents—ten francs. At night grand S.O.S. rocket and Very light display—ten francs. While for a further twenty francs the tourist will be allowed to pick up as many souvenirs in the way of rolls of barbed wire, dud bombs and blind crumps as he can stagger away with. By this means the country will be cleared of its explosive matter and I shall be able to spend my declining years in Park Lane, or, anyway, Tooting.

Our Albert Edward has not been making any plans as to his future lately, but just now it looks very much as if his future will be spent in gaol. It happened this way. He had been up forward doing some O. Pipping. While he was there he made friends with a battery and persuaded the poor fools into doing some shooting under his direction. He says it is great fun sitting up in your O. Pip, a pipe in your teeth, a telescope clapped to your blind eye, removing any parts of the landscape that you take a dislike to.

"I don't care for that tree at A 29.b.5.8″," you say

to the telephone. "It's altogether too crooked (or too straight). Off with its head!" and, hey presto! the offending herb is not. Or, "That hill at C 39.d.7.4" is quite absurd; it's ridiculously lop-sided. I think we'll have a valley there instead." And lo! the absurd excrescence goes west in a puff of smoke.

Our Albert Edward spent a most enjoyable week altering the geography of Europe to suit his taste. Then one morning he made a trifling error of about thirty degrees and some few thousand yards and removed the wrong village.

"One village looks very much like another, and what are a few thousand yards this way or that in a war of world-wide dimensions? Gentlemen, let us not be trivial," said our Albert Edward to the red-hatted people who came weeping to his O. Pip. Nevertheless some unpleasantness resulted, and our Albert Edward came home to shelter in the bosom of us, his family.

The unpleasantness spread, for twenty-four hours later came a chit for our Albert Edward, saying if he had nothing better to do would he drop in and swop yarns with the General at noon that day? Our Albert Edward made his will, pulled on his parade boots, drank half a bottle of brandy neat, kissed us farewell and rode off to his doom. As he passed the borders of the camp The O'Murphy uncorked himself from a drain, and, seeing his boon-companion faring forth a-horse, abandoned the ratstrafe and trotted after him.

A word or two explaining The O'Murphy. Two years ago we were camped at one end of a certain damp dark

gully up north. Thither came a party of big marines and a small Irish terrier, bringing with them a long naval gun, which they covered with a camouflage of sackcloth and ashes and let off at intervals. Whenever the long gun was about to fire the small dog went mad, bounced about behind the gun-trail like an indiarubber ball, in an ecstasy of expectation. When the great gun boomed he shrieked with joy and shot away up the gully looking for the rabbit. The poor little dog's hunt up and down the gully for the rabbit that never had been was one of the most pathetic sights I ever saw. That so many big men with such an enormous gun should miss the rabbit every time was gradually killing him with disgust and exasperation.

Meeting my groom one evening I spoke of the matter to him, casually mentioning that there was a small countryman of ours close at hand breaking his heart because there never was any rabbit. I clearly explained to my groom that I was suggesting nothing, dropping no hints, but I thought it a pity such a sportsman should waste his talents with those sea-soldiers who were outfits like ours about, offering all kinds of opportunities to one of the right sort. I again repeated that I was making no suggestions and passed on to some other subject.

Imagine my astonishment when, on making our customary bi-weekly trek next day, I discovered the small terrier secured to our tool-limber by a piece of baling-wire, evidently enjoying the trip and abusing the limber-mules as if he had known them all his life. Since

he had insisted on coming with us there was nothing further to be said, so we christened him "The O'-Murphy," attached him to the strength for rations and discipline, and for two years he has shared our joys and sorrows, our billets and bully-beef, up and down the land of Somewheres.

But it was with our Albert Edward he got particularly chummy. They had the same dislike of felines and the same taste in biscuits. Thus when Albert Edward rode by, ears drooping, tail tucked in (so to speak), *en route* to the shambles, The O'Murphy saw clearly that here was the time to prove his friendship, and trotted along behind. On arriving at H.Q. the comrades shook paws and licked each other good-bye. Then Albert Edward stumbled within and The O'Murphy hung about outside saucing the brass-collared Staff dogs and waiting to gather up what fragments remained of his chum's body after the General had done with it. His interview with the General our Albert Edward prefers not to describe; it was too painful, too humiliating, he says. That a man of the General's high position, advanced age and venerable appearance could lose his self-control to such a degree was a terrible revelation to Albert Edward. "Let us draw a veil over that episode," he said.

But what happened later on he did consent to tell us. When the General had burst all his blood vessels, and Albert Edward was congratulating himself that the worst was over, the old man suddenly grabbed a Manual of Military Law off his desk, hurled it into a corner and dived under a table, whence issued scuffling sounds,

grunts and squeals. "See that?" came the voice of the General from under the table. "Of all confounded impudence!—did you see that?"

Albert Edward made noises in the negative. "A rat, by golly!" boomed the venerable warrior, "big as a calf, came out of his hole and stood staring at me. Damn his impudence! I cut off his retreat with the manual and he's somewhere about here now. Flank him, will you?"

As Albert Edward moved to a flank there came sounds of another violent scuffle under the table, followed by a glad whoop from the General, who emerged rumpled but triumphant.

"Up-ended the waste-paper basket on him," he panted, dusting his knees with a handkerchief. "And now, me lad, what now, eh?"

"Fetch a dog, sir," answered Albert Edward, mindful of his friend The O'Murphy. The General sneered, "Dog be blowed! What's the matter with the old-fashioned cat? I've got a plain tabby with me that has written standard works on ratting." He lifted up his voice and bawled to his orderly to bring one Pussums. "Had the old tabby for years, me lad," he continued; "brought it from home—carry it round with me everywhere; and I don't have any rat troubles. Orderly!

"Fellers come out here with St. Bernard dogs, shot-guns, poison, bear-traps and fishing-nets and never get a wink of sleep for the rats, while one common cat like my old Pussums would—— Oh, where is that confounded feller?"

He strode to the door and flung it open, admitting, not an orderly but The O'Murphy, who nodded pleasantly to him and trotted across the room, tail twinkling, love-light shining in his eyes, and deposited at Albert Edward's feet his offering, a large dead tabby cat.

Albert Edward remembers no more. He had swooned.

XXIV

MON REPOS

ALBERT EDWARD and I are on detachment just now. I can't mention what job we are on because Hindenburg is listening. He watches every move made by Albert Edward and me and disposes his forces accordingly. Now and again he forestalls us, now and again he don't. On the former occasions he rings up Ludendorff, and they make a night of it with beer and song; on the latter he pushes the bell violently for the old German God.

The spot Albert Edward and I inhabit just now is very interesting; things happen all round us. There is a tame balloon tied by a string to the back garden, an ammunition column on either flank and an infantry battalion camped in front. Aeroplanes buzz overhead in flocks and there is a regular tank service past the door. One way and another our present location fairly teems with life; Albert Edward says it reminds him of London. To heighten the similarity we get bombed every night.

Promptly after Mess the song of the bomb-bird is heard. The searchlights stab and slash about the sky like tin swords in a stage duel; presently they pick up the bomb-bird—a glittering flake of tinsel—and the racket begins. Archibalds pop, machine guns chatter,

rifles crack, and here and there some optimistic sportsman browns the Milky Way with a revolver. As Sir I. Newton's law of gravity is still in force and all that goes up must come down again, it is advisable to wear a parasol on one's walks abroad.

In view of the heavy lead-fall Albert Edward and I decided to have a dug-out. We dug down six inches and struck water in massed formation. I poked a finger into the water and licked it. "Tastes odd," said I, "brackish or salt or something."

"We've uncorked the blooming Atlantic, that's what," said Albert Edward; "cork it up again quickly or it'll bob up and swamp us." That done, we looked about for something that would stand digging into. The only thing we could find was a molehill, so we delved our way into that. We are residing in it now, Albert Edward, Maurice and I. We have called it "*Mon Repos,*" and stuck up a notice saying we are inside, otherwise visitors would walk over it and miss us.

The chief drawback to "*Mon Repos*" is Maurice. Maurice is the proprietor by priority, a mole by nature. Our advent has more or less driven him into the hinterland of his home and he is most unpleasant about it. He sits in the basement and sulks by day, issuing at night to scrabble about among our boots, falling over things and keeping us awake. If we say "Boo! Shoo!" or any harsh word to him he doubles up the backstairs to the attic and kicks earth over our faces at three-minute intervals all night.

Albert Edward says he is annoyed about the rent,

but I call that absurd. Maurice is perfectly aware that there is a war on, and to demand rent from soldiers who are defending his molehill with their lives is the most ridiculous proposition I ever heard of. As I said before, the situation is most unpleasant, but I don't see what we can do about it, for digging out Maurice means digging down "*Mon Repos,*" and there's no sense in that. Albert Edward had a theory that the mole is a carnivorous animal, so he smeared a worm with carbolic tooth-paste and left it lying about. It lay about for days. Albert now admits his theory was wrong; the mole is a vegetarian, he says; he was confusing it with trout. He is in the throes of inventing an explosive potato for Maurice on the lines of a percussion grenade, but in the meanwhile that gentleman remains in complete mastery of the situation.

The balloon attached to our back garden is very tame. Every morning its keepers lead it forth from its abode by strings, tie it to a longer string and let it go. All day it remains aloft, tugging gently at its leash and keeping an eye on the War. In the evening the keepers appear once more, haul it down and lead it home for the night. It reminds me for all the world of a huge docile elephant being bossed about by the mahout's infant family. I always feel like giving the gentle creature a bun.

Now and again the Boche birds come over disguised as clouds and spit mouthfuls of red-hot tracer-bullets at it, and then the observers hop out. One of them "hopped out" into my horse lines last week. That is to

say his parachute caught in a tree and he hung swinging, like a giant pendulum, over my horses' backs until we lifted him down. He came into "*Mon Repos*" to have bits of tree picked out of him. This was the sixth plunge overboard he had done in ten days, he told us. Sometimes he plunged into the most embarrassing situations. On one occasion he dropped clean through a bivouac roof into a hot bath containing a Lieutenant-Colonel, who punched him with a sponge and threw soap at him. On another he came fluttering down from the blue into the midst of a labour company of Chinese coolies, who immediately fell on their faces, worshipping him as some heavenly being, and later cut off all his buttons as holy relics. An eventful life.

XXV

"FLY, GENTLE DOVE"

WE were told off for a job of work over the bags not long ago. The Staff sent us some pigeons with their love, and expressed the hope that we'd drop them a line from time to time and let them know how the battle was raging, and where. (The Staff live in constant terror that one day the War will walk completely away from them and some unruly platoon bomb its way up Unter den Linden without their knowing a thing about it.)

Next morning we duly pushed off, and in the course of time found ourselves deep in Bocheland holding a sketchy line of outposts and waiting for the Hun to do the sporting thing and counter. More time passed, and as the Hun showed no signs of getting a move on we began to look about us and take stock.

Personally I felt that a square meal might do something towards curing a hollow feeling that was gnawing me beneath the belt. As I was rummaging through my haversack the pigeon-carrier approached and asked for the book of rules.

Now to the uninitiated, I have no doubt, pigeon-flying sounds the easiest game in the world. You just take a picture-postcard, mark the spot you are on with a cross, add a few words, such as, "Hoping this finds you in the

pink, as it leaves me at present—I don't think," insert it in the faithful fowl's beak, say, "Home, John," and in a few minutes it is rattling into the General's letter-box. This is by no means the case. Pigeons are the kittlest of cattle. If you don't treat them just so they will either chuck up the game on the spot or hand your note to Hindenburg. To avoid this a book of the rules is issued to pigeon-carriers, giving instructions as to when and how the creatures should be fed, watered, exercised, etc.

On this occasion I felt through my pockets for the book of the rules and drew blank. "What's the matter with the bird, anyhow?" I asked.

"Looks a bit dahn-'earted," said the carrier; "dejected-like, as you might say."

"Seeing you've been carrying it upside down for the last twenty-four hours it isn't to be wondered at," said my Troop Sergeant; "blood's run to its head, that's what."

"Turn it the other way up for a bit and run the blood back again," I suggested.

"Exercise is what it wants," said my sergeant firmly.

"By all means exercise it, then," said I.

The carrier demurred. "Very good, sir—but how, sir?"

"Ask the sergeant," said I. "Sergeant, how do you exercise a pigeon? Lunge it, or put it through Swedish monkey motions?"

The sergeant rubbed his chin stubble.

"Can't say I remember the official method, sir; one might take it for a walk at the end of a string, or——"

"These official pigeons," I interposed, "have got to be treated in the official manner or they won't work; their mechanism becomes deranged. We had a pigeon at the Umpteenth Battle of Wipers and upset it somehow. Anyway, when we told it to buzz off and fetch reinforcements, it sat on a tree licking its fluff and singing, and we had to throw mud at it to get it to shift. Where it went to then goodness only knows, for it has never been seen since. I am going to do the right thing by this bird."

I thereupon sent a galloper to the next outpost, occupied by the Babe and Co., asking him the official recipe for exercising pigeons. The answer came back as follows:—

"Ask Albert Edward. All I know about 'em is that you mustn't discharge birds of opposite sex together as they stop and flirt.

P.S.—You haven't got such a thing as a bit of cold pudden about you, guv'nor, have you? I'm all in."

I sent the galloper galloping on to Albert Edward's post.

"Don't discharge birds after sunset," ran his reply; "they're afraid to go home in the dark—that's all I recollect. Ask the Skipper.

P.S.—Got a bit of bully beef going spare? I'm tucked up something terrible."

I sighed and sent my messenger on to the Skipper, inquiring the official method of exercising pigeons. Half an hour later his answer reached me—

"Don't know. Try eating 'em. That's what I'm doing with mine."

While on the subject of carrier-pigeons, I may mention that one winter night I was summoned to Corps H.Q. Said a Red Hat: "We are going to be rude to the Boche at dawn and we want you to go over with the boys. When you reach your objectives just drop us a pigeon to say so. Here's a chit, take it to the pigeon loft and get a good nippy fowl. Good night and good luck."

I found the pigeon-fancier inside an old London omnibus which served for a pigeon-loft, spoon-feeding a sick bird. A dour Lancastrian, the fancier studied my chit with a sour eye, then, grumbling that he didn't know what the army was coming to turning birds out of bed at this hour, he slowly climbed a ladder and, poking his head through a trap in the roof, addressed himself to the pigeons.

"That you, Flossie? No, you can't go with them tail feathers missing to the General's cat. Jellicoe—no, you can't go neither, you've 'ad a 'ard day out with them tanks. Nasty cough you've got, Gaby; I'll give you a drop of 'ot for it presently. You're breathin' very 'eavy, Joffre; been over-eatin' yourself again, I suppose —couldn't fly a yard. Eustace, you're for it."

He backed down the ladder, grasping the unfortunate Eustace, stuffed it in a basket and handed it to me.

"I hope this is a good bird," said I, "nippy and all that?"

The fancier snorted, "Good bird? Nothing can't stop 'im, barrages, smoke, nothing. 'E's deserved the V.C. scores of times over; 'e's the best bird in the army, an' don't you forget it, sir."

I promised not to, caught up the basket and fled.

I reached the neighbourhood of the line at about 2 a.m. It was snowing hard and the whole front was sugared over like a wedding-cake, every track and landmark obliterated. For some hours I groped about seeking Battalion H.Q., tripping over hidden wire, tobogganning down snow-masked craters into icy shell-holes, the inimitable Eustace with me. Finally I fell head-first into a dug-out inhabited by three ancient warriors, who were sitting round a brazier sucking cigarettes. They were Brigade Scouts, they told me, and were going over presently. They were also Good Samaritans, one of them, Fred, giving me his seat by the fire and a mug of scalding cocoa, while his colleagues, Messrs. Alf and Bert, attended to Eustace, who needed all the attention he could get. I caught snatches of their conversation here and there: "Shall us toast 'im over the brazier a bit, Alf?" "Wonder if a drop o' rum would 'earten 'im?" "Tip it into his jaws when 'e yawns, Bert."

At length Eustace's circulation was declared restored and the three set about harnessing themselves for the war, encasing their legs in sand-bags, winding endless mufflers round their heads and donning innumerable

odd overcoats, so that their final appearance was more that of apple-women than scouts.

We then set out for the battle, Bert leading the way towards the barrage which was cracking and banging away in yellow flashes over the Boche lines.

Presently we heard a muffled hail ahead.

"Wazzermatter, Bert?" Alf shouted.

"They've quit—slung their 'ook," came the voice.

Fifty yards brought us bumping up against Bert, who was prodding through the débris of a German post with the point of his bayonet.

"So the swines have beat it?" said Fred. "Any soovenirs?"

"Nah!" said Bert, spitting, "not a blinkin' 'am-sandwich."

"Is this really our objective?" I asked.

"It is, sir," Bert replied. "Best sit down and keep quiet; the rest of the boys will be along in a jiffy, and they'd bomb their own grandmothers when they're worked up."

I put my hand in the basket and dragged Eustace forth. He didn't look up to V.C. form. Still I had explicit orders to release him when our objective was reached, and obedience is second nature with me.

I secured my message to his leg, wished him luck and tossed him high in the air. A swirl of snow hid him from view.

I didn't call at H.Q. when I returned. I went straight home to bed and stayed there. As they did not send for me and I heard no more about it I conjectured

that the infallible Eustace had got back to his bus and all was well. Nevertheless I had a sort of uneasy feeling about him. I heard no more of it for ten days, and then, out walking one afternoon, I bumped into the pigeon-fancier. There was no way of avoiding the man; the lane was only four feet wide, bounded by nine-foot walls with glass on top. So I halted opposite him, smiled my prettiest and asked after Eustace. "So glad he got home all right," said I; "a great bird that."

The fancier glared at me, his sour eyes sparkling, his fists opening and shutting. I felt that only bitter discipline stood between them and my throat.

"Ay, sir," said he, speaking with difficulty, "he's a great bird, but not the bird he was. He got home all right yesterday, but very stiff in the legs from walking every step o' the way."

XXVI

THERE AND BACK

MY batman is a man with a grievance. He squats outside my tent all day moodily burnishing my buttons and swears and sighs, sighs and swears. In the words of my groom and countryman, "Ye'd think there'd be a black dog atin' the hearrt in his shest the way he is, the poor scut."

I learn that he has given out that if he sees a crump coming he'll "Blinkin' well wait for it," that he presented his bosom chum with a black eye gratis, and is declining beer. All this sounds like love, but isn't. This is the way of it.

Last week after nineteen months' undetected misbehaviour in the tented field, he was granted ten days' leave. He departed radiant as a May morn, groomed and glittering from spurs to cap badge.

Within three days he was back again.

According to his version of the affair, he reached the coast in good order and was given a hearty meal by some ladies in a canteen but lost it in mid-Channel. Owing to mines, air raids, and things both boat and train were scandalously late, but in the end he arrived at Victoria at 6 a.m. still in good order. Outside the station were a number of civilians waiting for soldier relatives. One of them, a small sandy man in a black bowler and tie,

very respectable (connected with the retail undertaking trade, my batman says) accosted him and inquired whether anything had been seen of his brother Charlie, a territorial bombardier who was supposed to be coming by that train, but had not materialized.

My batman could give no information and they fell into a discussion as to what could have happened to Charlie: whether he might have missed the train or fallen off the boat. My batman favoured the latter theory, he had felt very like it himself, he said. One thing led to another and presently the sandy man said:

"Well, what about it?" lifting his elbow suggestively, and winking.

My batman said he didn't mind if he did, so they adjourned to a little place near by that the sandy man knew of, and had one or two, the sandy man behaving like a perfect gentleman throughout, standing drink for drink, cigar for cigar.

At 7 a.m. or thereabouts, the sandy man excused himself on the plea of business (which he explained was very healthy owing to the inclemency of the weather) and betook himself off, my batman returning to Victoria to retrieve his pack.

By this time his order was not so good as it had been, owing, he thinks, to (a) the excitement of being home again, hearing civilians all talking English and seeing so many intact houses at once; (b) the bereaved state of his stomach. Whatever it was he navigated to the station with difficulty and "comin' over all dizzy like," reclined on a platform bench and closed his eyes.

When he opened them again it was to see the white cliffs of Albion rapidly disappearing over the stern rail of a trooper. He closed his eyes again and told himself he was dreaming, but not for long—he might deceive his reason but not his stomach.

He soon saw that he was in mid-Channel going back to France. He sat up on deck and shouted for someone to stop the ship.

"'E's come to, Bill," said a familiar voice at his side, and turning, he beheld the cheerful countenances of Frederick Wilkes and William Buck, two stalwarts of "ours" who were returning from leave.

My batman asked Frederick Wilkes what he thought he was doing of.

"Saving you from six months in clink for over-staying your leaf, ol' dear!" Frederick replied cheerfully. "Me and Bill found you on the station, blind to the world, so we loaded you on the train and bringed you along. Pretty job we had of it, too, getting you past the red-caps, you slopping about like a lu-natic."

"Clink! Overstayin' my leaf!" shrilled my batman. "Gor-blimy! I ain't 'ad no leaf—I only just landed!"

"Delerious again, Bill," said Frederick, and Bill nodded. "Of course you've had your leaf, an' a wonderful good leaf, too, by the looks of you—blind to the world from start to finish, not knowin' dark from daylight."

"I'll tell the first R.T.O. I see all about it when I land—you perishin' kidnappers!" foamed my batman.

"Ho no, you won't!" said Frederick, complacently.

"We aren't going to 'ave you runnin' about in your light-'eaded condition disgracin' the regiment—are we, Bill?"

"Not likely," William Buck replied. "We're going to take you back with us, safe and sound if we 'ave to break your neck to do it, an' don't you forget it, ol' man!"

I think it is extremely improbable that my batman ever will.

XXVII

HOT AIR

THE scene is a base camp behind the Western Front. In the background is a gravel pit, its brow fringed with pines. On the right-hand side is a black hut; against one wall several cast-iron cylinders are leaning; against another several stretchers; behind it a squad of R.A.M.C. orderlies are playing pitch and toss for profit and pleasure. On the left-hand side is a cemetery.

On the turf in the centre of the stage are some two hundred members of the well-known British family, Atkins. The matter in hand being merely that of life and death those in the rear ranks are whiling away the time by playing crown and anchor. Their less fortunate comrades in the prominence of the front ranks are "havin' a bit o' shut eye"—in other words are fast asleep sitting up, propped the one against the other.

Before them stands a Bachelor of Science disguised as a Second Lieutenant. From the green and black brassard about his arm and the *attar de chlorine* and *parfum de phosgène* which cling about him in a murky aureole one would guess him to be connected with the Gas Service. And one would be quite correct; he is.

. . . . . .

Lecturer: "Ahem! Pay attention to me, please; I am going to give you a little chat on Gas. When you go

up the line one of two things must inevitably happen to you; you will either be gassed or you will not. If you are not gassed strict attention to this lecture will enable you to talk as if you had been. On the other hand, if you are gassed it will enable you to distinguish to which variety you succumbed, which will be most instructive.

"There are more sorts of gas than one. There is the Home or Domestic Gas, which does odd jobs about the house at a bob a time, and which out here is fed to observation balloons to get them off the earth. There is Laughing Gas, so called from the fun the dentist gets out of his victims while they are under its influence; and lastly there is Hun Gas, which is not so amusing.

"Three varieties of gas are principally employed by the Hun. The first of these is Chlorine. Chlorine smells like a strong sanitary orderly or weak chloride of lime. The second on our list is Mustard Gas, so called because it smells like garlic. Everything that smells of garlic is not Mustard Gas, however, as a certain British Division which went into the line alongside some of our brave Southern allies regretfully discovered after they had been sweltering in their masks for thirty-six long, long hours.

"The third and last is Phosgène. Phosgène has a greenish whitish yellowish odour all its own, reminiscent of decayed vegetation, mouldy hay, old clothes, wet hides, burnt feathers, warm mice, polecats, dead mules, boiled cabbage, stewed prunes, sour grapes, or anything else you dislike.

"As all these gases have a depressing effect on the consumer if indulged in too freely the War Office has devised an effective counter-irritant, the scientific wonder of the age, the soldier's friend and *multum in parvo* —in short, the Respirator-Box. Here you will observe I have a respirator-box as issued to the troops.

"There are other kinds with lace trimmings and seasonable mottoes worked in coloured beads for the use of the Staff; but they do not concern us. Let us now examine the ordinary respirator-box. What do we discover? A neat canvas satchel, knapsack or what-not, which will be found invaluable for the storage of personal knick-knacks, such as soap, knives and forks, socks, iron rations, mouth-organs, field-marshal's batons, etc. Within the satchel (what-not or knapsack) we discover a rubber sponge-bag pierced with motor goggles, a clothes-peg, a foot of garden hose, a baby's teether (chewers among you will find this a comforting substitute for gum), a yard or two of strong twine (first-aid to the braces), a tube of Anti-Dimmer (use it as tooth-paste, your smile will beam more brightly), and a record card, on which you are invited to inscribe your name, age, vote and clubs; your golf, polo and ludo handicaps; complaints as to the cooking or service and any sunny sentiments or epigrams that may occur to you from time to time.

"Should you be in the line and detect the presence of hostile gas in large numbers your first action should be to don your respirator-box and your second to give

the alarm. The donning of the respirator is done in five motions by the best people:—

"1. Remove the cigarette, chewing-gum or false teeth from the mouth and place it (or them) behind the ear (or ears).

"2. Tear the sponge-bag out of the knapsack (what-not or satchel) and slap it boldly on the face as you would a mustard-plaster.

"3. Pin it to your nose by means of the clothes-peg.

"4. Work the elastics well into the back hair.

"5. Swallow the teether and carry on with deep breathing exercises, as done by Swedes, sea-lions and such-like.

"The respirator once in position, pass the good news on to your comrades by performing *fortissimo* on one of the numerous alarums with which every nice front line is liberally provided. But please remember that gas alarms are for gas only, and do not let your natural exuberance or love of music carry you away, as it is liable to create a false impression; witness the case of some of our high-spirited Colonials, who, celebrating a national festival (the opening of the whippet racing-season in New South Wales) with a full orchestra of Klaxon and Strombos horns, rattles, gongs, shell-cases, tin-cans, sackbuts, psalteries and other instruments of musick, sent every living soul in an entire army area stampeding into their smell-hats, there to remain for forty-eight hours without food, drink or benefit of clergy.

"Having given you full instructions as to the correct

method of entering your respirators I will now tell you how to extricate yourselves. You must first be careful to ascertain that there is no gas left about. Tests are usually made (1) with a white mouse, (2) with a canary.

"If the white mouse turns green there is gas present; if it don't there ain't. If the canary wags his tail and whistles 'Gee! ain't it dandy down in Dixie!' all is well, but if it wheezes 'The End of a Perfect Day' and moults violently, beware, beware! If through the negligence of the Quartermastering Department you have not been equipped with either mice or canaries do not start sniffing for gas yourselves, but remember that your lives are of value to your King and country and send for an officer. To have first sniff of all gas is one of an officer's privileges; he hasn't many, but this is one of them and very jealously guarded as such. If an officer should catch you snuffing up all the gas in the neighbourhood he will be justifiably annoyed and peevish.

"Now, having given you all the theory of anti-gas precautions, we will indulge in a little practice. When I shout the word 'Gas!' my assistants will distribute a few smoke bombs among you, and every man will don his respirator in five motions and wend his way towards the gas-chamber, entering it by the south door and leaving it by the north. Is that quite clear? Then get ready. Gas!"

. . . . . .

Four or five N.C.O. Instructors suddenly pop up

out of the gravel pit and bombard the congregation with hissing smoke grenades. The front ranks wake up, spring to their feet in terror and leg it for safety at a stretched gallop, shedding their respirators for lightness' sake as they flee. The rear ranks, who, in spite of themselves, have heard something of the lecture, burrow laboriously into their masks. Some wear them as hats, some as ear-muffs, some as chest-protectors.

The smoke rolls over them in heavy yellow billows.

Shadow shapes, hooded like Spanish inquisitors, may be seen here and there crouched as in prayer, struggling together or groping blindly for the way out. One unfortunate has his head down a rabbit-hole, several blunder over the edge of the gravel pit and are seen no more.

There is a noise of painful laboured breathing as of grampuses in deep water or pigs with asthma.

The starchy N.C.O. Instructors close on the helpless mob and with muffled yelps and wild waving of arms herd them towards the south door of the gas-chamber, push them inside and shoot the bolts.

The R.A.M.C. Orderlies are busy hauling the bodies out of the north door, loading them on stretchers and trotting them across to the cemetery, at the gates of which stands the Base Burial Officer beamnig welcome.

The lecturer, seeing the game well in progress, lights a pipe and strolls home to tea.

XXVIII

THE CONVÉRT

I FOUND No. 764, Trooper Hartley, W.J., in the horse lines, sitting on a hay-bale perusing a letter which seemed to give him some amusement. On seeing me he arose, clicked his spurs and saluted. I returned the salute, graciously bidding him carry on. We go through the motions of officer and man very punctiliously, William and I. In other days, in other lands, our relative positions were easier.

The ceremonies over I sat down beside him on the hay-bale, and we became Bill and Jim to each other.

"Did you ever run across Gustav Müller in the old days?" William inquired, thumbing a fistful of dark Magliesburg tobacco into his corn-cob incinerator. "'Mafoota,' the niggers called him, a beefy man with an underdone complexion."

"Yes," I said, "he turned up in my district on the Wallaby in 1913 or thereabouts, with nothing in the world but a topee, an army overcoat and a box of parlour magic. Set up as a wizard in Chala's kraal. Used to produce yards of ribbon out of the mouths of the afflicted, and collapsible flower-pots out of their nostrils —casting out devils, you understand. Was scratching together a very comfortable practice; but he began to dabble in black politics, so I moved him on. An en-

tertaining old rogue; I don't know what became of him."

William winked at me through a cloud of blue tobacco smoke. "I do. He went chasing a rainbow's end North of the Lakes, and I went along with him. You see, Gustav's great-aunt Gretchen appeared to him in a dream and told him there was alluvial gold in a certain river bed, tons of it, easy washing, so we went after it. We didn't find it; but that's neither here nor there; a man must take a chance now and again, and this was the first time Gustav's great-aunt had let him down. She'd given him the straight tip for two Melbourne Cups and a Portugoose lottery in her time. Some girl, great-aunt Gretchen! Anyway there was Gustav and me away up at the tail-end of Nowhere, with the boys yapping for six months' back pay, and we couldn't have bought a feed of hay for a nightmare between us. We just naturally had to do something, so——"

"So you just naturally took to poaching ivory," said I. "I know you. Go on."

William grinned. "Well, a man must live, you know. How'msodever we struck a bonanza vein of *m'jufu* right away and piled up the long white nuggets in a way that would drive you to poetry. A Somali Arab took the stuff from us on the spot, paying us in cattle at a fifty-per-cent discount, which was reasonable enough, seeing that he ran ninety per cent of the risks. Everything sailed along like a beautiful dream. The elephants was that tame they'd eat out of your hand, and you could stroll out and bowl over a dozen of the

silly blighters before breakfast if you felt in the mood. The police hadn't got our address as yet. The only competitor that threatened got buckshot in his breeches, which changed his mind and direction for him very precipitous. The industry boomed and boomed.

"'Another year of this,' says I to myself, 'and I'll retire home and grow roses, drive a pony-trap and be a churchwarden.'

"Then one day the Arab headman blows into camp, and squatting outside our tent, commences to lamentate and pipe his eye in a way that would make you think he'd ate a skinful of prickly pears.

"'What's biting you, Bluebell?' I asked.

"'*Allah akbar!* God is good but business is rotten,' says he, and pitches a woeful yarn how that columns of Askaris was marching thither and thence, poking their flat noses in where they wasn't invited; Inglische gunboats were riding every wave, scaring seven bells out of the coast dhows, and consequently commerce was sent to blazes and a poor man couldn't get an honest living nohow. The long and short of it was that ivory smuggling was off for the period of the War.

"'What war, you scum?' says Gustav, pricking his freckled ears. 'Who's warring?'

"'The Inglische and Germans, of course,' says the Arab. 'Didn't the B'wana know?'

"'No, the B'wana doesn't,' says I; 'our private Marconi outfit is broke down owing to the monkeys swinging on the wires. Now trot home, you barbarous

ape, while me and my colleague throws a ray of pure intellect on the problem. *Bassi.*'

"So he soon dismisses at the double and is seen no more in them vicinities.

"'Well, partner,' says I to Gustav, 'this is a fair knock-out—what?'

"But Gustav, he grumbles something I couldn't catch and walks off into the bush with his head down, afflicted with thought.

"He didn't come in for supper, so I scoffed his share and turned in.

"At moonrise I thought I heard a bull elephant trumpeting like he was love-sick, but it wasn't. It was Gustav coming home singing the *Wacht am Rhein.* He brings up opposite my bed.

"'Oh, give over and let the poor lions and leopards snatch some sleep,' says I.

"'I was born in Shermany,' says he.

"'Don't let that keep you awake, ole man,' says I. 'What saith the prophet? "If a cat kittens on a fish-plate they ain't necessarily herrings."'

"'I'm a Sherman,' says he.

"'You've been so long with white men that nobody'd know it,' says I. 'Forget it, and I won't tell on you. Why, you ain't seen Shermany these thirty years, and you wouldn't know a squarehead if you was to trip over one. Go to bed, Mr. Caruso.'

"'Well, I'm going to be a mighty good Sherman now, to make up for lost time,' says he grim-like, 'and

in case you got any objections I'll point out that you've the double express proximitous to your stomach.'

"He had me bailed up all right. Arguments weren't no use with the cuss. 'I'm a Sherman' was all he'd say; and next day we starts to hoof it to Germany territory, me promenading in front calling Gustav every name but his proper one, and him marching behind, prodding me in the back with the blunderbuss. He disenjoyed that trip even more than I did; he had to step behind me all day for fear I'd dodge him into the bush; and he sat up all night for fear the boys would rescue me. He got as red-eyed as a bear and his figure dropped off him in bucketfuls.

"At the end of a month we crossed the border and hit the trail of the Deutscher—burnt villages everywhere, with the mutilated bodies of women and picaninnies lying about, stakes driven through 'em, Waugh!

"'Are you still a Sherman?' I asks; but Gustav says nothing; he'd gone a bit white about the gills all the same. Then one morning we tumbles into one of their columns and the game is up. I was given a few swipes with a *kiboko* for welcome and hauled before the Commander, a little short cove with yellow hair, a hand-carved jaw and spectacles. He diagnosed my case as serious, prescribed me some more *kiboko,* and I was hove into a grass hut under guard, pending the obsequies.

"The Officers called Gustav a good sport, gave him a six-by-four cigar and took him off to dinner. I noticed he looked back at me once or twice. So I sits down in

the hut and meditates on some persons' sense of humour, with a big Askari buck padding it up and down outside, whiling away the sunny hours with a bit of disembowelling practice on his bayonet.

"A couple of days flits by while the column is away spreading the good word with fire and stake. Then on the third night I hears a scuffle outside the hut, and the Askari comes somersaulting backwards through the grass wall like as if an earthquake had butted him in the brisket. He gave a couple of kicks and stretched out like as if he was tired.

"'Whist! Is that you, Bill?' comes a whisper through the hole.

"'What's left of me,' says I. 'Who are you?'

"'Me—Gustav,' says the whisperer.

"'What's the antic this time? Capturing me again?' says I.

"'No, I'm rescuing you now,' says he.

"'The devil you are,' says I, and with that I glided out through the hole and followed him on my stomach. A sentry gave tongue at the scrub-edge, but Gustav rose up out of the grass and bumped him behind the ear and we went on.

"'Well, you're a lovely quick-change artist, capturing a bloke one moment and rescuing him the next,' says I presently. 'What's come over you? Ain't you a Sherman no more?'

"Gustav groans as if his heart was broke. 'I've been away thirty years. I didn't know they was like that; I'd forgotten. Oh, my Gawd, what swine!' He

spits like a man that has bit sour beer, and we ran on again."

"Didn't they chase you?" I asked.

William nodded.

"But they couldn't catch two old bush-bucks like us, and the next day we fell in with a British column that was out hunting them. 'Twas a merry meeting. Gustav enlisted with the Britishers on the spot."

William tapped the travel-soiled letter in his hand. "This is from him. He's down in Nairobi, wounded. He says he's sitting up taking nourishment, and that great-aunt Gretchen has appeared to him again and showed him a diamond pipe in the Khali Hari, which will require a bit of looking into *après la guerre*—if there ever is any *après*."

XXIX

A REST CURE

NOT long ago a notice appeared in Part II Orders to the effect that our Army had established a Rest Home at X where invalid officers might be sent for a week's recuperation.

Now X is a very pleasant place, consisting of a crowd of doll's-house châlets set between cool pine-woods and the sea.

The châlets are labelled variously "Villa des Roses," "Les Hirondelles," "Sans Souci," and so on, and in the summertimes of happier years swarmed with comfortable bourgeois, bare-legged children and Breton nannas; but in these stern days a board above the gate of "Villa des Roses" announces that the Assistant-Director of Agriculture may be found within meditating on the mustard-and-cress crop, while "Les Hirondelles" and "Sans Souci" harbour respectively the Base Press Censor (whose tar-brush hovered over this perfectly priceless article) and a platoon of the D.L.O.L.R.R.V.R. (Duchess of Loamshire's Own Ladies' Rabbit Rearing Volunteer Reserve).

X, as I said before, is an exceedingly pleasant place; you may lean out of the window o' mornings and watch the D.L.O.L.R.R.V.R.'s Sergeant-Majoress putting her platoon through Swedish monkey motions, and in the

afternoons you can recline on the sands and watch them sporting in the glad sea-waves (telescopes protruding from the upper windows of "Villa des Roses" and "Sans Souci" suggesting that the A.D.A. and the B.P.C. are similarly employed).

The between-whiles may be spent lapping up ozone from the sea, resin from the pine-woods, and champagne cocktails which Marie-Louise mixes so cunningly in the little café round the corner; and what with one thing and another the invalid officer goes pig-jumping back to the line fit to mince whole brigades of Huns with his bare teeth.

X, you will understand, is a very admirable institution, and when we heard about this Rest Home we were all for it and tried to cultivate fur on the tongue, capped hocks and cerebral meningitis; but the Skipper hardened his heart against us and there was nothing doing.

Then one morning MacTavish came over all dithery-like in the lines, fell up against a post, smashed his wrist-watch and would have brained himself had that been possible.

He picked himself up, apologised for making a fool of himself before the horses, patched his scalp with plaster from his respirator, borrowed my reserve watch "Pretty Polly," and carried on.

"Pretty Polly" can do two laps to any other watch's one without turning a hair-spring. Externally she looks very much like any other mechanical pup the Ordnance sells you for eleven francs net; her secret

lies in her spring, which, I imagine, must have been intended for "Big Ben," but sprang into the wrong chassis by mistake.

At all events as soon as it is wound up it lashes out left and right with such violence that the whole machine leaps with the shock of its internal strife and hops about on the table after the manner of a Mexican dancing bean, clucking like an ostrich that has laid twins.

It will be gathered that my "Pretty Polly" is not the ultimate syllable in the way of accuracy, but as MacTavish seemed to want her and had been kind to me in the way of polo-sticks, I handed her over without a murmur.

The same afternoon MacTavish came over dithery again, dived into a heap of bricks and knocked himself out for the full count.

We put him to bed and signalled the Vet. The Vet reported that MacTavish's temperature was well above par and booming. He went on to state that MacTavish was suffering from P.U.O. (which is Spanish for "flu") and that he probably wouldn't weather the night.

The Skipper promptly 'phoned O.C. Burials, inviting him to dine next evening, and Albert Edward wired his tailor, asking what was being worn in headstones.

William, our Mess President, took up a position by the sick man's side in hopes he would regain consciousness for long enough to settle his mess-bill, and the rest of us spent the evening recalling memories of poor old Mac, his many sterling qualities, etc.

However, next morning a batman poked his head into the Mess and said could Mr. MacTavish have a little whisky, please, he was fancying it, and anyway you couldn't force none of that there grool down him not if you was to use a drenching bit.

At noon the batman was back to say that Mr. MacTavish was fancying a cigarette now, also a loan of the gramophone and a few cheerful records.

The Skipper promptly 'phoned postponing O.C. Burials, and Albert Edward wired his tailor, changing his order to that of a canary waistcoat.

That evening MacTavish tottered into the Mess and managed to surround a little soup, a brace of cutlets and a bottle of white wine without coming over dithery again.

But for all that he was not looking his best; he weaved in his walk, his eye was dull, his nose hot, his ear cold and drooping, and the Skipper, gazing upon him, remembered the passage in Part II Orders and straightway sat down and applied that MacTavish be sent to X at once, adding such a graphic pen-picture of the invalid (most of it copied from a testimonial to somebody's backache pills) as to reduce us to tears and send MacTavish back to his bed badly shaken to hear how ill he'd been.

The Skipper despatched his pen-picture to H.Q. and forgot all about it, and so did H.Q. apparently, for we heard nothing further, and in due course forgot all about it ourselves, and in the meanwhile MacTavish got back

into form, and MacTavish in form is no shrinking lily be it said.

He has a figure which tests every stitch in his Sam Browne, a bright blue eye and a complexion which an external application of mixed weather and an internal application of tawny port has painted the hue of the beetroot.

Then suddenly, like a bomb from the blue, an ambulance panted up to the door and presented a H.Q. chit to the effect that the body of MacTavish be delivered to it at once to bear off to X.

The Skipper at the time was out hacking and Albert Edward was in charge; he sent an orderly flying to MacTavish, who rolled in from his tent singing "My Friend John" at the top of his voice and looking more like an over-fed beetroot than ever.

"Dash it all, I don't want to go to their confounded mortuary," he shouted; "never felt fitter in my life. I can't go; I won't go!"

"You'll have to," said Albert Edward; "can't let the Skipper down after that pen-picture he wrote; the Staff would never believe another word he said. No, MacTavish, my son, you'll have to play the game and go."

"But, you ass, look at him," wailed the Babe; "look at his ruddy, ruby, tomato-ketchup, plum-and-apple complexion. What are you going to do about that?"

"I'll settle his complexion," replied Albert Edward grimly; "tell his man to toss his tooth-brush into the meat-waggon; and you, Mac, come with me."

He led the violently protesting MacTavish into the

kitchen. The cook tells me Albert Edward pounded two handfuls of flour into MacTavish's complexion and filled his eye-sockets up with coal-dust, and I quite believe the cook, for in five minutes' time I came on Albert Edward dragging what I at first took to be the body of a dead Pierrot down the passage towards the waiting ambulance, at the same time exhorting it to play the game and wobble for the Skipper's sake.

The wretched MacTavish, choking with flour and blinded with coal-dust, wobbled like a Clydesdale with the staggers.

I saw a scared R.A.M.C. orderly bound out of the car and assist Albert Edward to hoist MacTavish aboard, trip him up and pin him down on a stretcher. Then the ambulance coughed swiftly out of sight.

The allotted week passed but no MacTavish came bounding back to us like a giant refreshed with great draughts of resin, and we grew anxious; which anxiety did not abate when, in reply to the Skipper's inquiries, the Rest Home authorities wired denying all knowledge of him.

Goodness knows what we should have done if a letter from MacTavish himself had not arrived next morning, to say that he had lain on his back in the ambulance digging coal-dust out of his eyes and coughing up flour till the car stopped, not, to his surprise, at the Rest Home, but at a Casualty Clearing Station.

Some snuffling R.A.M.C. orderlies bore him tenderly to a tent and a doctor entered, also snuffling. MacTavish is of the opinion that the whole of the medical

staff had P.U.O., and the doctor was the sickest of the lot and far from reliable.

At all events, on seeing MacTavish's face, he ejaculated a bronchial "Good Lord!" and tearing MacTavish's tunic open, stuck a trumpet against his tummy and listened for the ticks.

Apparently he heard something sensational, for he wheezed another "Good Lord!" and decorated MacTavish with a scarlet label.

Within an hour our hero found himself on board a Red Cross train *en route* for the coast.

There were a lot of cheerful wounded on the bus, getting all the soup and jelly they wanted; but MacTavish got only lukewarm milk and precious little of that. From scraps of hushed conversation he caught here and there he gathered that his life hung by a thread.

He was feeling very bewildered and depressed, he said, but, remembering his duty to the Skipper, played the game and kept body and soul together on drips of jelly surreptitiously begged from the cheerful wounded.

Next morning he found himself in hospital in England, where he still remains. He says he has been promoted from warm milk to cold slops, but is still liable to die at any moment, he understands.

He has discovered that he was sent home with "galloping heart disease," but nobody in the hospital can get even a trot out of it, and boards of learned physicians sit on him all day long, their trumpets planted on his tummy listening for the ticks.

MacTavish says he thinks it improbable that they

ever will hear any ticks now, for the excellent reason that he threw the cause thereof—my "Pretty Polly," to wit—out of the window the day he arrived.

In a postscript he adds that he considers he has played the game far enough, and that if the Skipper doesn't come and bail him out soon he'll bite the learned physicians, kiss the nurses, sing "My Friend John" and disgrace the Regiment for ever.

XXX

THE HARRIERS (I)

THE Boche having lately done a retreat—"strategic retirement," "tactical adjustment," "elastic evasion," or whatever Ludendorff is calling it this week—in plain words the Boche, having gloriously trotted backwards off a certain slice of France, Albert Edward and I found ourselves attached to a Corps H.Q. operating in a wilderness of grass-grown fields, ruined villages and smoking châteaux.

One evening Albert Edward loitered up to the hen-house I was occupying at the time and chatted to me through the wires as I shaved.

"Put up seventeen hares and ten covey of partridges visiting outposts to-day—take my advice and scrap that moustache while you're about it, it must be a heavy drain on your system—and twenty hares and four covey riding home. Do you find lathering the ears improves their growth, or what?"

"The country is crawling with game," said I, ignoring his personalities, "and here we are hanging body and soul together on bully and dog biscuit."

"Exactly," said Albert Edward, "and in the meanwhile the festive *lapin* breeds and breeds. Has it ever occurred to you that, if something isn't done soon, we'll have Australia's sad story over again here in Picardy?

Give the rabbits a chance and in no time they'll have eaten off all the crops in France. Why, on the Burra I've seen——"

"One moment," said I; "if I listen to your South Australian rabbit story again you've got to listen to my South African locust yarn; it's only fair."

"Oh, shut up," Albert Edward growled; "can't you understand this question is deadly serious?"

"Best put the Tanks on to 'em then," I suggested; "they'd enjoy themselves, and the Waterloo Cup wouldn't be in it—Captain Monkey-Wrench's brindled whippet, 'Sardine Tin,' 6 to 4; Major Spanner's 'Pig Iron,' 7 to 2; even money the field."

"Your humour is a trifle strained," said Albert Edward; "if you're not careful you'll crack a joke at the expense of a tendon one of these days."

"Look here," said I, wiping the blood off my safety-razor, "you're evidently struggling to give expression to some heavy brain wave; out with it."

"What about a pack of harriers?" said Albert Edward. "There must be swarms of sportive tykes about, faithful Fidos that have stuck to the dear old homestead through thick and thin, also refugee animals that follow the sweet-scented infantry cookers. I've got my old hunting-horn; you've got your old crop; between the two we ought to be able to mobilize 'em a bit and put the wind up these darn hares. I'm going to try anyway. I may say I look on it as a duty."

"Looked on in that light it's a sacred duty," said

I; "and—er—incidentally we might reap a haunch of hare out of it now and again, mightn't we?"

"Incidentally, yes," said Albert Edward, "and a trifle of sport into the bargain—incidentally."

So we set about collecting a pack there and then by offering our servants five francs per likely dog and no questions asked.

No questions were asked, but I have a strong suspicion that our gentlemen were up all night and that there were dark deeds done in the dead of it, for the very next evening my groom and countryman presented us with a bill for forty-five francs.

The dogs, he informed us, were kennelled "in a little shmall place the like of an ice-house" at the northern extremity of the château grounds, and that "anyway a blind man himself couldn't miss them wid the screechin' an' hollerin' they are afther raisin' be dint of the confinement."

I had an appointment with the Q. Staff (to explain why I had indented for sixty-four horse rations while only possessing thirty-two horses, the excuse that they all enjoyed very healthy appetites apparently not sufficing), so Albert Edward went forth to inspect the pack alone.

He came into Mess very late, looking hot and dishevelled.

"My word, they've looted a blooming menagerie," he panted in my ear; "still, couldn't expect to pick Pytchley puppies off every bush, I suppose."

"What have they got, actually?" I inquired.

"Two couple of Belgian light-draught dogs—you know, the kind they hitch on to any load too heavy for a horse—an asthmatic beagle, an anæmic bloodhound, a domesticated wolf, an unfrocked poodle, and a sort of dropsical pug."

"What on earth is the pug for?" I asked.

"Luck," said Albert Edward. "Your henchman says 'them kind of little dogs do be bringing ye luck,' and backs it up with a very convincing yarn of an uncle of his in Bally-something who had a lucky dog—'as like this wan here as two spits, except maybe for the least little curliness of the tail'—which provided complete immunity from ghosts, witches' evil and ingrowing toe-nails. I thought it cheap at five francs."

"But, good Lord, that lot'll never hunt hares," I protested.

"Won't they?" said Albert Edward grimly. "With the only meal they'll ever see prancing along in front of them, and you and me prancing along behind scourging 'em with scorpions, I rather fancy they will. By the way, I know you won't mind, but I've had to shift your bed out under the chestnut-tree; it's really quite a good tree as trees go."

"But why can't I stop in my hen-house?" I objected.

"Because I've just moved the pack there," said he.

"But why?" I went on. "What's the matter with the ice-house?"

"That's just it," he hissed in my ear; "it isn't an ice-house—never was; it's the De Valcourt family vault."

The next day being propitious, we decided to hold our first meet that evening, and issued a few invitations. The Veterinary Bloke and the Field Cashier promised to show up, likewise the Padre, once the sacredness of our cause had been explained to him.

At noon "stables" Albert Edward reported the pack in fine fettle. "Kicking up a fearful din and look desperate enough to hunt a holy angel," said he. "At five o'clock, me lad, Hard forrard! Tally-ho! and Odds-boddikins!"

However at 4.45 p.m., just as I was mounting, he appeared in my lines wearing slacks and a very downcast expression.

"Wash-out," he growled; "they've been fed and are now lying about, blown up and dead to the world."

"But who the devil fed them?" I thundered.

"They fed themselves," said Albert Edward. "They ate the blooming lucky dog at half-past four."

We therefore postponed the hunt until the morrow; but cannibalism (so cannibals assure me), once indulged in, becomes as absorbing as morphia or jig-saws, and at two-fifteen the next afternoon my groom reported the beagle to have gone the way of the pug, and the pack once more dead to the world.

There was nothing for it but to postpone the show yet again, and tie up each hound separately as a precaution against further orgies.

However it seemed to have become a habit with them, for the moment they were unleashed on the even-

ing of the third day they turned as one dog upon the poodle.

I wiped the bloodhound's nose for him with a deft swipe of my whip lash, and Albert Edward's charger anchored the domesticated wolf by treading firmly on its tail, all of which served to give the fugitive a few seconds' start; and then a wave of mad dog dashed between our horses' legs and was on his trail screaming for gore.

The poodle heard the scream and did not dally, but got him hence with promptitude and agility. He streaked across the orchard, leading by five lengths; but the good going across the park reduced his advantage. He dived through the fence hard pressed and, with the bloodhound's hot breath singeing his tail feathers, leaped into the back of a large farm-cart which happened, providentially for him, to be meandering down the broad highway.

In the shafts of the cart was a sleepy fat Percheron mare. On the seat was a ponderous farmeress, upholstered in respectable black and crowned with a bead bonnet. They were probably making a sentimental excursion to the ruins of their farm. I know not; but I do know that the fat mare was suddenly shocked out of a pleasant drowse to find herself the centre of a frenzied pack of wolves, bloodhounds and other dog-hooligans, and, not liking the look of things, promptly bolted.

Albert Edward and I dropped over the low hedge to see the cart disappearing down the road in a whirl of dust pursued by our vociferous harriers.

The fat farmeress, her bonnet wobbling over one ear, was tugging manfully at the reins and howling to Saint Lazarus of Artois to put on the brakes. Over the tail-board protruded the head of the poodle, yelping derision at his baffled enemies.

People will tell you Percherons cannot gallop; can't they? Believe me that grey mare flitted like a startled gazelle. At all events she was too good for our pack, whom we came upon a mile distant, lying on their backs in a ditch, too exhausted to do anything but put their tongues out at us, while far away we could see a small cloud of dust careering on towards the horizon.

"God help the Traffic Controlman at the next corner," Albert Edward mused; "he'll never know what struck him. Well, that was pretty cheery while it lasted, what? To see that purler the Padre took over the garden-wall was alone worth the money."

"Oh, well, I suppose we'd best herd these perishers home to kennels while they're still too weak to protest. Come on."

"And in the meanwhile the festive *lapin* breeds and breeds," said Albert Edward.

XXXI

THE HARRIERS (II)

ALBERT EDWARD and I were seated on a log outside the hen-house which kennelled our pack when we perceived Algy, the A.D.C., tripping daintily towards us. Albert Edward blew a kiss. "Afternoon, Algy. How *chit* he looks in his pink and all! Tell me, do people ever mistake you for a cinema attendant and give you pennies?"

"Afternoon, Algy," said I. "Been spending a strenuous morn carrying the old man's respirator—with his lunch inside?"

For answer Algy tipped me backwards off the log, and sitting down in my place, contemplated our hounds for some seconds.

"And are these the notorious Hare-'em Scare-'ems?" he inquired.

I nodded. "Yessir; absolutely the one and only pack of harriers operating in the war zone. Guaranteed gun-broke, shell-shocked, shrapnel-pitted and bullet-bitten."

Algy sniffed. "What's that big brute over in the corner, he of the crumpled face and barbéd smile? Looks like a bloodhound."

"Is a bloodhound," said Albert Edward. "If you don't believe me step inside and behave like raw rump steak for a moment."

Algy pointed his cane. "And that creature industriously delousing itself? That's a wolf, of course?"

"Its wolfery is only skin-deep," said I. "A grey gander all but annihilated it yesterday. In my opinion it's a sheep in wolf's clothing."

Algy wagged his cane, indicating the remaining two couples.

"And these? What breed would you call them?"

Albert Edward grunted. "You could call them any breed you like and be partly right. We've named them 'The Maconochies,' which, being interpreted, meaneth a little of everything."

"And how many hares have you killed?" Algy inquired.

"We haven't exactly killed any as yet," said I, "but we've put the breeze up 'em; their *moral* is very low."

"Well, my bold Nimrods," said Algy, "I'm sorry to say the game is up."

"What do you mean by 'game'?" objected Albert Edward. "I've told you before that this is a serious attempt to avert a plague of rodents. Why, in Australia I've seen——"

Algy held up his hand.

"I know, I know. But some people who have not enjoyed your harrowing Colonial experience are a trifle sceptical. Listen. Last evening, as I was driving home with the old man through Vaux-le-Tour, whom should I see but you two sportsmen out on the hillside riding

down a hare, followed at some distance by three mounted bargees——"

"The Padre, the Field Cashier and O.C. Bugs," Albert Edward explained. "We're making men of 'em. Go on."

—"followed at a still greater distance," continued Algy, "by a raging band of mongrels. By the way, don't you get your hunt the wrong way round, the cart before the horse, so to speak? I always thought it customary for the hounds to go first."

"In some cases the hare wouldn't know it was being hunted if they did," said I. "This is one of them. Forge ahead."

"Well, so far so good; the old gent was drowsing in his corner and there was no harm done."

"So you gave him a dig in the ribs, I suppose, and bleated, 'Oh, look at naughty boys chasing ickle bunny wabbit!'" sneered Albert Edward.

Algy wagged his head. "Not me. You woke him up yourself, my son, by tootling on your little tin trumpet. He heard it through his dreams, shot up with a 'Good Lord, what's that?' popped his head out of the window and saw the brave cavalcade reeling out along the sky-line like a comic movie. He drank in the busy scene, then turned to me and said——"

Albert Edward interrupted. "I know exactly what he said. He said, 'Algy, me boy, that's the spirit. *Vive le sport!* How it reminds us of our young days in the Peninsular! Oft-times has our cousin of Welling-

ton remarked to us how Waterloo was won on the playing——'"

Algy cut off the flow and continued with his piece. "He said to me, 'God bless my soul, if those young devils aren't galloping a hare!' I said, 'Sir, they maintain that they are doing good work by averting a threatened plague of rodents, a state of affairs which has proved very detrimental to the Anti-podes.'

"'Threatened plague of grandmothers!' replied the old warrior. 'They're enjoying themselves, that's what they're doing—having a splendid time. Mind you, I've no objection to you young chaps amusing yourselves *in secret,* but this is too damn flagrant altogether. Just imagine the hullabaloo in the House if word of these goings-on got home. "B.E.F. enjoying themselves! Don't they know there's a war on? *Cherchez le général* and off with his head!" Trot round and see your dog-fancying friends and tell 'em that if they're fond of good works I recommend crochet.' Thus the General. I must be off now, got to take the old bird up to have a peep at the War. Good-byee."

Algy tripped daintily off home again, twirling his cane and whistling cheerfully. Sourly we watched him depart.

"I believe that youth positively revels in spreading gloom," Albert Edward growled. "Oh, well, I suppose we'll have to get rid of the dogs now. Orders is orders."

"But do you think they'll go?" I asked. "We've been feeding 'em occasionally of late."

"We'll herd 'em down to where they can get wind of the infantry cookers," said Albert Edward; "once they sniff the rare old stew they'll forget all about us."

Accordingly an hour later we released our pack from the hen-house for the last time. They immediately gave chase to an errant tabby kitten, which threw off a noise like many siphons and shot up a tree, baffling them completely. We speedily herded them out of the château grounds, Albert Edward ambling in front, wringing mournful music out of his horn, and I bringing up the rear, snapping my whip-cracker under the sterns of the laggards. We had no sooner left the park for the open grass country beyond when up jumped a buck hare, right from under our feet, and away went the pack rejoicing, bass and falsetto.

Albert Edward tugged his excited mare to a standstill. "Look at those blighters!" he shouted. "Hunting noses down in pukka style for the first time, just because they know we can't follow them. Oh, this is too much!"

"I don't see why we shouldn't follow them at a distance," said I. "We can pretend there's no connection—there is no connection really, we didn't lay 'em on. They're hunting on their own. We're just out for a ride."

Albert Edward winked an eye at me and gave his mare her head. The pack by this time was well across the plain, the wolf leading, noisily supported by the Maconochies and the bloodhound. Thrice the hare turned clear and squatted, but, thanks to the blood dog's infallible nose, he was ousted each time and pushed on,

failing visibly. He made a sharp curve towards the windmill, and Albert Edward and I topped the miller's fence in time to see the Maconochies roll him over among the weeds. We also saw something on the highway behind the mill which we had not previously noticed, namely a grey Limousine. On a fallen tree by the wayside sat the General, his face as highly coloured as his hat. Towards us down the garden-path tripped Algy, twirling his cane and whistling cheerily. Albert Edward groaned.

"Something in the demeanour of yon youth tells me he beareth our death-warrants. Here, you hold the horses while I feed the guillotine. This is by far, far the best thing that I have ever done."

He slung his reins and tottered to his doom. I watched him approach within five yards of the old man when a strange thing happened. The General suddenly uttered a loud cry and, leaping to his feet, commenced to dance up and down the road, tearing and belabouring himself and swearing so outrageously that I had difficulty in holding the horses. His chauffeur and Algy rushed to his side, and they and Albert Edward grouped in a sympathetic circle while he danced and raved and beat himself in their midst. Presently the air seemed to be full of flying tunics, shirts, camisoles, etc., and a second later I beheld the extraordinary spectacle of a Lieutenant-General dancing practically nude (expecting for his cap and boots) in the middle of a French highway, while two subalterns and a private smacked him all over, and most heartily. For nearly a minute it

continued, and then he seemed to get himself under control and was led away by Algy to his car, the chauffeur following, retrieving apparel off trees and bushes. Albert Edward, one quivering smirk, wobbled up and took his reins. "By Jove! saved again. He can't very well bite the hand that spanked him, can he?"

"But what on earth was the matter?" I asked. "A fit, religious mania, a penance—what?"

"He sat on a waspodrome," said Albert Edward, "and they got on his tail."

XXXII

THE CAMERA CANNOT LIE

WHEN I was young I was extremely handsome. I have documentary evidence to prove as much. There is in existence a photograph of a young gentleman standing with his back to a raging seascape, one hand resting lightly on a volume of Shakespeare, which in turn is supported by a rustic table. The young gentleman has wide innocent eyes, a rosebud mouth and long golden curls (the sort poor dear old Romney used to do so nicely). For the rest he is tastefully upholstered in a short-panted velvet suit, a lace collar and white silk socks. *"Little Lord Fauntleroy,"* you murmur to yourself. No, Sir (or Madam), it is ME—or was me, rather. When I was young no girl thought herself properly married unless I was present at the ceremony, got up like a prize rabbit and tethered to the far end of her train. Nowadays I am not so handsome. True, you can urge a horse past me without blindfolding it and all that, but nobody ever mistakes me for Maxine Elliott.

Personally I was quite willing to be represented at the National Portrait Gallery by a coloured copy of the presentment described above, but my home authorities thought otherwise, and when last I was in England on leave—shortly after the Battle of Agincourt—they

shooed me off to Valpré. "Go to Valpré," they said; "he is *so* artistic." So to Valpré I went, and was admitted by a handmaid who waved a white hand vaguely towards a selection of doors, murmuring, "Wait there, please." I opened the nearest door at a venture and entered.

In the waiting-room three other handmaids were at work on photographs. One was painting dimples on a lady's cheek; one filling in gaps in a Second-Lieutenant's moustache; one straightening the salient of a stock-broker's waistcoat. Presently the first handmaid re-appeared and somewhat curtly (I was waiting in the wrong room, it seemed) informed me that the Master was ready. So I went upstairs to the operating theatre. After an impressive interval a curtain was thrust aside and the Master entered. He was not in the least like the artist of my first photograph, who had chirruped and done tricks with an indiarubber monkey to make me prick my ears and appear sagacious. This man had the mane of a poodle, a plush smoking-jacket with rococo trimmings, satin cravat, rings and bangles like the lads in *La Bohème,* and I knew myself to be in the presence of True Art, and bowed my head.

At the sight of me he winced visibly; didn't seem to like my looks at all. However he pulled himself together and advanced to reconnoitre. He pushed me into a chair, manipulated some screws at the back, and I found my head fast in a steel clamp. I pleaded for gas or cocaine, but he took no notice and prowled off to the far end of the theatre to observe if distance would lend

any enchantment. Apparently it would not. The more he saw of me the less he seemed to admire the view.

Suddenly the fire of inspiration lit his eye and he came for me. I struggled with the clamp, but it clave like a bull-terrier to a mutton chop. In a moment he had me by the head and started to mould it nearer to his heart's desire with plump powerful hands. He crammed half my lower jaw into my breast pocket, pinned my ears back so tightly that they wouldn't wag for weeks, pressed my nose down with his thumb as though it were the button of an electric bell and generally kneaded my features from the early Hibernian to the late Græco-Roman. Then, before they could rebound to their normal positions, he had sprung back, jerked the lanyard and fired the camera.

Some weeks later the finished photographs arrived. The handmaids had done their bit, and the result was a pleasing portraiture, an *objet d'art,* an ornament to anybody's family album. The man Valpré was an artist all right.

A few days ago the Skipper whistled me into the orderly room. His table was littered with parade states, horse-registers and slips of cardboard, all intermingled. The Skipper himself appeared to be undergoing some heavy mental disturbance. His forehead was furrowed, his *toupet* rumpled, and he sucked his fountain-pen, unconsciously imbibing much dark nourishment.

"Identification cards," he explained, indicating the slips. "Got to carry 'em now. Comply with Italian regulations. Been trying to describe you. Napoo."

He prodded the result towards me. I scanned it and decided he had got it mixed with horse-registers. It read as follows:—

Born	Yes.
Height	17 hands.
Hair	Bay.
Eyes	Two.
Nose	Undulating.
Moustache	Hogged.
Complexion	Natural.
Special Marks	

The Skipper pointed to the blank space. "That's what I want to know—special marks. Got any? Snip, blaze, white fetlock, anything?"

"Yessir," said I. "Strawberry patch on off gaskin." He sucked thoughtfully at his fountain-pen. "Mmph," he said, "shouldn't mention it if I were you. Don't want to have to undress in the middle of the street every time you meet an Intelligence, do you?" I agreed that I did not—not before June, anyhow. The Skipper turned to the card again and frowned.

"Couldn't call it a speaking likeness exactly, this little pen-picture of you, could one? If you only had a photograph of yourself now."

"I have, Sir," said I brightly.

"Good Lord, man, why didn't you say so before? Here, take this and paste the thing in. Now trot away."

I trotted away and pasted Valpré's *objet d'art* on to the card.

Yesterday evening Albert Edward and I were riding out of a certain Italian town (no names, no pack drill). Albert Edward got involved in a right-of-way argument between five bullock wagons and two lorries, and I jogged on ahead. On the fringe of the town was a barrier presided over by a brace of Carabinieri caparisoned with war material, whiskers and cocked hats of the style popularised by Bonaparte. Also an officer. As I moved to pass the barrier the officer spied me and, not liking my looks (as I hinted before, nobody does), signed to me to halt. Had I an identification card, please? I had and handed it to him. He took the card and ran a keen eye over the Skipper's little pen-picture and Valpré's "Portrait Study," then over their alleged original. "Lieutenant," said he grimly, "these don't tally. This is not you."

I protested that it was. He shook his head with great conviction, "Never! The nose in this photograph is straight; the ears retiring; the jaw, normal. While with you—— [Continental politeness restrained him]. Lieutenant, you must come with me."

He beckoned to a Napoleonic corporal, who approached, clanking his war material. I saw myself posed for a firing squad at grey dawn and shivered all over. I detest early rising.

By this time the corporal had outflanked me, clanking more munitions, and I was on the point of being marched off to the Bastille, or whatever they call it, when Albert Edward suddenly insinuated himself into the party and addressed himself to the officer. "Half

a minute, Mongsewer [any foreigner is Mongsewer to Albert Edward]. The photograph is of him all right, but it was taken before his accident."

"His accident?" queried the officer.

"Yes," said Albert Edward; "sad affair, shell-shock. A crump burst almost in his face, and shocked it all out of shape. Can't you see?"

The Italian leaned forward and subjected my flushed features to a piercing scrutiny; then his dark eyes softened almost to tears, and he handed me back my card and saluted.

"Sir, you have my apologies—and sympathy. Good evening."

"Albert Edward," said I, as we trotted into the dusk, "you may be a true friend but you are no gentleman."

XXXIII

LIONEL TRELAWNEY

LIONEL TRELAWNEY MOLYNEUX-MOLYNEUX was of the race of the Beaux. Had he flourished in the elegant days, Nash would have taken snuff with him, D'Orsay wine—no less. As it was, the high priests of Savile Row made obeisance before him, the staff of the *Tailor and Cutter* penned leaders on his waistcoats, and the lilies of the field whined "Kamerad" and withered away.

When war broke out Lionel Trelawney issued from his comfortable chambers in St. James's and took a hand in it. He had no enthusiasm for blood-letting. War, he maintained from the first, was a vuglar pastime, a comfortless revolting state of affairs which bored one stiff, forced one to associate with all sorts of impossible people and ruined one's clothes. Nevertheless the West-end had to be saved from an invasion of elastic-sided boots, celluloid dickeys, Tyrolese hats and musical soup-swallowing. That was *his* war-aim.

Through the influence of an aunt at the War Office he obtained a commission at once, and after a month's joining-leave (spent closeted with his tailor) he appeared, a shining figure, in the Mess of the Loamshire Light Infantry and with them adventured to Gallipoli. It is related that during the hell of that first landing,

when boats were capsizing, wounded men being dragged under by tentacles of barbed wire, machine-guns whipping the sea to bloody froth, Lionel Trelawney was observed standing on a prominent part of a barge, his eyeglass fixed on his immaculate field boots, petulantly remarking, "And now, damn it, I suppose I've got to get wet!"

After the evacuation the battalion went to France, but not even the slush of the salient or the ooze of Festubert could dim his splendour. Whenever he got a chance he sat down, cat-like, and licked himself. Wherever he went his batman went also, hauling a sackful of cleaning gear and changes of raiment. On one occasion, hastening to catch the leave train, he spurred his charger into La Bassée Canal. He emerged, like some river deity, profusely decorated in chick-weed, his eyeglass still in his eye ("Came up like a blinking U-boat," said a spectator, "periscope first"), footed it back to billets and changed, though it cost him two days of his leave.

He was neither a good nor a keen officer. He was not frightened—he had too great a contempt for war to admit the terror of it—but he gloomed and brooded eternally and made no effort to throw the faintest enthusiasm into his job. Yet for all that the Loamshires suffered him. He had his uses—he kept the men amused. In that tense time just before an attack, when the minute hand was jerking nearer and nearer to zero, when nerves were strung tight and people were sending anxious inquiries after Lewis guns, S.A.A., stretchers,

bombs, etc., Lionel Trelawney would say to his batman, "Have you got the boot and brass polish, the Blanco, the brushes? Sure?" (a sigh of relief). "Very well, *now* we'll be getting on," and so would send his lads scrambling over the parapet grinning from east to west.

"Where's ole Collar and Cuffs?" some muddy warrior would shout after a shrieking tornado of shell had swept over them. "Dahn a shell-hole cleanin' his teef," would come the answer, and the battered platoon chuckled merrily. "'E's a card, 'e is," said his Sergeant admiringly. "Marched four miles back to billets in 'is gas-mask, perishin' 'ot, all because he'd lost 'is razor an' 'adn't shaved for two days. 'E's a nut 'e is and no error."

It happened that the Loamshires were given a job of crossing Mr. Hindenburg's well-known ditch and taking a village on the other side. A company of tanks which came rolling out of the dawn-drizzle, spitting fire from every crack, put seven sorts of wind up the Landsturmer gentlemen in possession; and the Loamshires, getting their first objectives with very light casualties, trotted on for their second in high fettle, sterns up and wagging proudly. The tanks went through the village knocking chips off the architecture and pushing over houses that got in the way; and the Loamshires followed after, distributing bombs among the cellars.

The consolidation was proceeding when Lionel Trelawney sauntered on the scene, picking his way delicately through the débris of the main street. He lounged up to a group of Loamshire officers, yawned,

told them how tired he was, cursed the drizzle for dimming his buttons and strolled over to a dug-out with the object of sheltering there. He got no further than the entrance, for as he reached it a wide-eyed German came scrambling up the steps and collided with him, bows on. For a full second the two stood chest to chest gaping, too surprised to move. Then the Hun turned and bolted. But this time Lionel Trelawney was not too bored to act. He drew his revolver and rushed after him like one possessed, firing wildly. Two shots emptied a puddle, one burst a sandbag, one winged a weather-cock and one went just anywhere. His empty revolver caught the flying Hun in the small of the back as he vaulted over a wall; and Lionel Trelawney vaulted after him.

"Molly's gone mad," shouted his amazed brother-officers as they scrambled up a ruin for a better view of the hunt. The chase was proceeding full-cry among the small gardens of the main street. It was a stirring spectacle. The Hun was sprinting for dear life, Lionel Trelawney hard on his brush, yelping like a frenzied fox-terrier. They plunged across tangled beds, crashed through crazy fences, fell head over heels, picked themselves up again and raced on, wheezing like punctured bagpipes.

Heads of Atkinses poked up everywhere. "S'welp me if it ain't ole Collar and Cuffs! Go it, Sir, that's the stuff to give 'em!" A Yorkshireman opened a book and started to chant the odds, but nobody paid any attention to him. The Hun, badly blown, dodged inside a shattered hen-house. Lionel Trelawney tore up hand-

fuls of a ruined wall and bombed him out of it with showers of brickbats. Away went the chase again, cheered by shrill yoicks and cat-calls from the spectators.

Suddenly there was an upheaval of planks and brick-dust, and both runners disappeared.

"Gone to ground, down a cellar," exclaimed the brother-officers. "Oh, look! Fritz is crawling out."

The white terrified face of the German appeared on the ground level, then with a wriggle (accompanied by a loud noise of rending material) he dragged his body up and was on his way once more. A second later Lionel Trelawney was up as well, waving a patch of grey cloth in his hand. "Molly's ripped the seat out of his pants," shouted the grand-stand. "Yow, tear 'm, Pup!" "Good ole Collar and Cuffs!" chorused the Loamshire Atkinses.

Lionel Trelawney responded nobly; he gained one yard, two yards, five, ten. The Hun floundered into a row of raspberry canes, tripped and wallowed in the mould. Trelawney fell on him like a Scot on a three-penny bit and they rolled out of sight locked in each other's embrace.

The Loamshires jumped down from their crazy perches and doubled to see the finish, guided by the growlings, grunts, crashing of raspberry canes and jets of garden mould flung sky-high. They were too late, however. They met the victor propelling the remains of the vanquished up a lane towards them. His fawn breeches were black with mould, his shapely tunic shredded to ribbons; his sleek hair looked like a bird's-

nest; his nose listed to starboard; one eye bulged like a shuttered bow-window; his eye-glass was not. But the amazing thing about it was that he didn't seem to mind; he beamed, in fact, and with a cheery shout to his friends—"Merry little scamper—eh, what?"—he drop-kicked his souvenir a few yards further on, exclaiming, "That'll teach you to slop soup over my shirt-front, you rude fellow!"

"Soup over your shirt-front!" babbled the Loamshires. "What are you talking about?"

"Talking about?" said Lionel Trelawney. "Why, this arch-ruffian used to be a waiter at Claritz's, and he shed mulligatawny all over my glad-rags one night three years ago—aggravated me fearfully."

XXXIV

THE BOOBY TRAP

A GENEROUS foe, the soul of chivalry, I am always ready to admit that the Boche has many good points. For instance, he is—er—er—oh, well, I can't think of any particular good point just for the moment. On the other hand, it must be admitted that he has his bad ones also, and one of these is that he cannot stand success; he is the world's worst winner.

Never does he pull off one of these "victorious retreats" of his but he needs must spoil the effect by leaving behind all sorts of puerile booby traps, butter-slides, etc., for the annoyance of the on-sweeping vanquished, displaying a state of mind which is usually slippered out of one at a dame school.

Most of his practical jokes are of the fifth of November order and detonate by means of a neat arrangement of springs, wire and acid contained in a small metal cylinder.

You open a door and the attached house blows away all round it, leaving the door in your damaged hand. You step on a duckboard; something goes bang! and the duckboard ups and hits you for a boundary to leg —and so on, all kinds of diversions.

Of course you don't really open doors and prance on duckboards; that's only what he (Jerry) in his

simple faith imagines you will do. In reality you revive memories of the days when as a small boy you tied trip-strings in dark passages and balanced water-jugs on door-tops; and all the Boche's elementary parlour-tricks immediately become revealed unto you.

Not long ago the Hun, thirsting for yet more imperishable laurels, made a sudden masterly manœuvre towards the East. Our amateur Staff instantly fell into the trap, and when battle joined again we found we had been lured twenty miles nearer Germany.

The Hun had not left things very comfortable for us; most of the cover had been blown up, and there was the usual generous provision of booby traps lying about dumbly pleading to be touched off. However, we sheltered in odd holes and corners, scrounged about for what we could "souvenir" and made ourselves as snug as possible.

It was while riding out alone on one of these souvenir-ing expeditions that our William came upon a chaff-cutter standing in what had once been the stable yard of what had once been a château. Now to a mounted unit a chaff-cutter is a thing of incredible value. It is to us what a mincing-machine is to the frugal housewife.

Our own cutter was with the baggage, miles away in the rear, and likely to remain there.

William slipped off his horse and approached the thing gingerly. It was a Boche engine, evidently quite new and in excellent trim. This was altogether too good to be true; there must be a catch somewhere. William withdrew twenty yards and hurled a brick at it

—two, three, four bricks. Nothing happened. He approached again and tying one end of a wrecked telephone wire to it, retired behind a heap of rubble and tugged.

The chaff-cutter rocked to and fro and finally fell over on its side without anything untoward occurring. William, wiping beads from his brow, came out of cover. There was no catch in it after all. It was a perfectly genuine bit of treasure-trove. The Skipper would pat his curly head, say "Good boy," and exalt him above all the other subalterns. *Bon*—very *bon!*

But how to get it home? For you cannot carry full-grown chaff-cutters about in your breeches pockets. For one thing it spoils the set of your pants. He must get a limber. Yes, but how?

The country was quick with other cavalrymen all in the souvenir business. If he left the chaff-cutter in order to fetch a limber, one of them would be sure to snap it up. On the other hand, if he waited for a limber to come trotting up of its own sweet will he might conceivably wait for the rest of the War. Limbers (G.S. Mule) are not fairy coaches.

Our William was up against it. He plunged his hands into his tunic-pockets and commenced to stride up and down, thinking to the best of his ability.

In pocketing his right hand he encountered some hard object. On drawing the object forth he discovered it to be his mother's gift. William's mother, under the impression that her son spends most of his time lying wounded and starving out in No-man's land, keeps him

liberally supplied with tabloid meals to sustain him on these occasions—herds of bison corralled into one lozenge, the juice of myriad kine concentrated in a single capsule. This particular gift was of peppermints (warranted to assuage thirst for weeks on end). But it was not the peppermints that engaged William's young fancy; it was the container, small, metal, cylindrical.

His inspiration took fire. He set the tin under the chaff-cutter, chopped off a yard of telephone wire, buried one end in peppermints, twisted the other about the leg of the cutter, mounted his horse and rode for dear life.

When he returned with the limber an hour later, he found three cavalrymen, two horse-gunners and a transporteer grouped at a respectful radius round the chaff-cutter, daring each other to jerk the wire.

When William stepped boldly forward and jerked the wire they all flung themselves to earth and covered their heads. When nothing happened and he coolly proceeded to load the cutter on the limber they all sat up again and took notice.

When he picked up the tin and offered them some peppermints they mounted their horses and rode away.

XXXV

THE PHANTOM ARMY

I CAN readily believe that war as performed by Messieurs our ancestors was quite good fun. You dressed up in feathers and hardware—like something between an Indian game-cock and a tank—and caracoled about the country on a cart-horse, kissing your hand to balconies and making very liberal expenses out of any fat (and unarmed) burgesses that happened along.

With the first frost you went into winter quarters—i.e. you turned into the most convenient castle and whiled away the dark months roasting chestnuts at a log fire, entertaining the ladies with quips, conundrums and selections on the harpsichord and vying with the jester in the composition of Limericks.

The profession of arms in those spacious days was both pleasant and profitable. Nowadays it is neither; it is a dreary *mélange* of mud, blood, boredom and blue-funk (I speak for myself).

Yet even it, miserable calamity that it is (or was), has produced its piquant situations, its high moments; and one manages to squeeze a sly smile out of it all, here and there, now and again.

I have heard the skirl of the Argyll and Sutherland battle-pipes in the Borghese Gardens and seen a High-

lander dance the sword-dance before applauding Rome. I have seen the love-locks of a matinée idol being trimmed with horse-clippers (weep, O ye flappers of Suburbia!) and a Royal Academician set to whitewash a pig-sty. I have seen American aviators in spurs, Royal Marines a-horse, and a free-born Australian eating rabbit. All these things have I seen.

And of high moments I have experienced plenty of late, for it has been my happy lot to be in the front of the hunt that has swept the unspeakable Boche back off a broad strip of France and Belgium, and the memory of the welcome accorded to us, the first British, by the liberated inhabitants will remain with us until the last "Lights Out." The procedure was practically the same throughout.

There would come a crackle of wild rifle-fire from the front of a village; then, as we worked round to the flank, a dozen or so blue-cloaked Uhlans would scamper out of the rear and disappear at a non-stop gallop for home. In a second the street would be full of people, emptying out of houses and cellars, pressing about us, shaking hands, kissing us and our horses even, smothering us with flowers, cheering "*Vivent les Anglais!*". "*Vive la France!*" clamouring, laughing, crying, mad with joy.

Grandmères would appear at attic windows waving calico tricolours (hidden for four long years) while others plastered up tricolour hand-bills—"*Hommage à nos Libérateurs,*" "God's blessing unto Tommy."

However, touching and delightful though it all might

be, it was not getting on with the war; this *embarras des amis* was saving the Uhlans' hide.

Furthermore, though I can bring myself to bear with a certain amount of embracing from attractive young things, I do not enjoy the salutations of unshorn old men; and when Mayors and Corporations got busy my native modesty rebelled, and I would tear myself loose and, with my steed decorated from ears to croup with flowers, so that I looked more like a perambulating hothouse than a poor soldier-man, take up the pursuit once more.

In due course we came to the considerable town of X. All happened as before. As we popped in at one flank the bold Uhlan popped out at the other, and the townsfolk flooded the streets. I was dragged out of the saddle, kissed, pump-handled and cheered while my bewildered charger was led aside and festooned with pink roses. Tricolours appeared at every window; handbills of welcome were distributed broadcast. The Mayor and Corporation arrived at the double, and we struggled together for some moments while they rasped me with their stubbly beards. When the first ecstasies had somewhat abated I gathered my troop and prepared to move again.

"Whither away?" the Mayor enquired, a fine old veteran he, wearing two 1870 medals and the ribbon of the Legion.

"To Z.," said I.

"*Ecoutez, donc,*" he warned. "They are waiting for you there in force, machine-guns and cannon."

I intimated that nevertheless I must go and have a look-see, at any rate, and so rode out of town, the vast crowd accompanying us to the outskirts, cheering, shouting advice, warnings and blessings. In sight of Z. we shed our floral tributes and, debouching off the highway into the open, worked forwards on the look-out for trouble.

It came. A dozen pip-squeaks shrilled overhead to cause considerable casualties among some neighbouring cabbages, and shortly afterwards rifle-fire opened from outlying cottages. I swung round and tried for an opening to the north, but a couple of machine-guns promptly gave tongue on that flank. Another flock of pip-squeaks kicked up the mould in front of us and some fresh rifles and machine-guns joined in. Too hot altogether.

I was just deciding to give it best and cut for cover when all hostile fire suddenly switched off, and a few minutes later I beheld light guns on lorries, machine-guns in motor-cars and Uhlans on horses stampeding out of the village by all roads east.

The day was mine. Yip, Yip! Bonza! Skoo-kum! Hurroosh! Nevertheless I was properly bewildered, for it was absurd to suppose that an overwhelming force of heavily-armed Huns could have been bluffed out of a strong position by the merest handful of unsupported cavalry. Manifestly absurd!"

I turned about, and in so doing my eye lit on the poplar-lined highway from X., and I understood. Along the road poured the hordes of an advancing army, advancing in somewhat irregular column of route, with

banners flying. The head of the column was not a mile distant. The Infantry must be on my heels, thought I. Stout marching! I grabbed up my glasses, took a long look and bellowed with laughter. It was not the Infantry at all; it was the liberated population of X., headed by the Mayor and Corporation, come out to see the fun, the *grandmères* and *grandpères,* the girls and boys, the dogs and babies, marching, hobbling, skipping, toddling down the *pavé,* waving their calico tricolours and singing the *Marseillaise.* I thought of the Boche fleeing eastward with the fear of God in his soul, and rolled about in my saddle drunk with joy.

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